



## **Adding a Charter Amendment Measure that Directly Benefits San Antonio Children, Youth, and Families**

**What is our policy recommendation?** As the City of San Antonio continues to grow, it is crucial that we prioritize the development of our youngest and most vulnerable residents so that the talent needs of tomorrow can be fully met. To ensure San Antonio has the future leaders and workforce it needs, we recommend dedicating 20% of the growth in COSA's annual revenue to additional grantmaking and initiatives focused on young San Antonians, ages 0-24. A revenue analysis by PFM estimates this new initiative would generate between \$10.4 million to \$56.3 million annually (depending on the baseline year) for the City Council to allocate towards high quality programming, initiatives, or grants that best support young people's needs.

**Why is this set-aside necessary?** Although young San Antonians (0-24) account for 35% of our city (515,000 of 1,472,000 residents), child and youth services represented only 6% of the city's general fund budget in both 2019 and 2024. According to the city's most recent Status on Poverty, young people (18 and under) also account for more than half of the 250,000 San Antonians who still live in poverty. Young San Antonians will determine the future of our city's leadership, workforce, health, and tax base. However, most of them cannot vote and thus are consistently overlooked in conversations about where to spend revenue growth.

**What kind of results would this investment make possible?** There are many local examples of the kinds of impactful programs this fund could support and help to scale. For example, out-of-school time providers, as measured by UP Partnership, are helping to improve student promotion to the next grade. In a recent study of 14,978 students who took part in afterschool programming in our community, 94% were promoted to the next grade level, compared to 85% of all ISD students in school districts that shared their data. Another example is AlamoPROMISE, which is expanding pathways to credentials for tens of thousands of high school students. Similarly, the NxT Level centers are actively changing the lives and trajectories of young people who have become disconnected from school or work.

**How would this work, practically?** A dedicated fund to track and monitor the use of these funds should be created, ensuring the dollars are used exclusively for child- and youth-focused initiatives. Crucially, the ballot measure should include an explicit commitment to not supplanting or replacing existing investment in children and youth. Robust financial tracking should be implemented through specific accounting codes that monitor these dedicated funds alongside existing investments in child and youth services. To help encourage innovation and guard against budget supplanting, these investments could prioritize new projects and/or the scaling proven initiatives. To support effective administration, a multi-stakeholder working group should be established to oversee fund distribution, monitor program implementation, ensure alignment with communitywide goals, and reinforce the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, which should be established through clear MOUs. This working group would help the

City Council to ensure clear timelines for fund disbursement, develop comprehensive monitoring systems, and prioritize evidence-based, high-quality investments.

**Would this bind future City Councils?** Dedicating a percentage of COSA's annual revenue growth to children and youth is distinct from an appropriation. The specific programs for investment would be determined by the City Council in each budget cycle. Rather than earmarking funds for a handful of specific programs, this set-aside approach allows for flexibility in how the allocated resources are utilized in each cycle, so that future City Councils will have the responsibility to assign these protected dollars based on the needs of their communities.

**Was this recommendation a part of the Charter Review Commission process?** This proposal was presented and reinforced by community champions at every public comment opportunity held during the Charter Review commission. It received the most public support of all new issues discussed with more than 20 organizations and communities speaking up during the process. Through this proposal process, UP Partnership has conducted fiscal analysis of COSA's investments in child and youth services and consulted with multiple state and national experts on the viability of this recommendation. These outside experts include PFM on the financial implications of this proposal, FM3 on a poll to assess the community's interest level, Underwood Law Firm on the legal viability of this proposal, and the Children's Funding Project on how other communities have pursued enacted similar set-asides.

**How would this impact the other priority items on the ballot?** In a poll of 706 San Antonio voters likely to cast a ballot in November 2024, 76% would support a "charter amendment to set aside 20 percent of the city budget every year for programs serving children and youth in San Antonio." Importantly, while voters support dedicating 20% of the total budget to children and youth services, our proposal only asks for 20% of future revenue growth. In contrast to this item, 49% of these likely voters said they would support the originally proposed slate of charter amendments. By expanding the Charter Review Commission's agenda to directly include San Antonio families as beneficiaries, the other critical issues being considered are more likely to receive the public support they deserve.

**Who would support the November ballot measure if this amendment were added?** This measure could be part of a unified 'Vote Yes' campaign for all of the proposed charter amendments. The Future Ready Bexar County plan includes over 100 signed institutional partners across the corporate, education, non-profit, philanthropy, and local government sectors. All of these signed partners have committed to shared advocacy, most of them gave input on the design of the poll conducted on this issue, and many of them took the Equitable Recovery Pledge for young people that UP Partnership launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key members of the UP Partnership board – which includes executives from several of our community's largest employers – would also be active partners in a fall campaign.