

5/21/25

Dear City Council Members:

This letter raises some key issues in relation to the goals of public safety and Infrastructure within our communities:

#### Public Safety:

As the Council considers a range of approaches to support community emergency preparedness and safety, one issue requires additional attention: youth mental health and well-being. Youth are facing increasing challenges and experiencing increasing levels of anxiety and stress as noted in reports in Education Week, the and a report from the American Psychological Association, among other organizations. In addition, youth living in areas impacted by extreme weather and climate events like extreme heat, flooding, and wildfires, can experience even higher levels of anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide ideation. These experiences can also lead to school absenteeism, delayed course completion and an increased chance of dropping out of school before graduation. The long-term impacts of these actions can have real consequences for the economic well-being of our communities. Youth require immediate supports to manage the challenges they face, and long-term programming to support the development of resilience and agency. School and community mental health programs and outreach are essential components that can support youth, but community resources and planning must take place to ensure that all youth have access to these services when emergency events take place and disrupt the typical pathways for outreach and support of young people.

#### Infrastructure:

An essential component in the safety and wellbeing of youth is a consistent connection to community, and to caring adults (family, friends, teachers, members of the community). In our community the library can provide this continuity in multiple ways: we have seen the role that public libraries played during periods of extreme wildfire smoke, flooding, and extreme heat – a safe haven and refuge. Libraries can support youth mental health through providing opportunities for community engagement, access to resources, access to a location that may provide respite from heat or smoke or other extreme weather, may offer internet access and may provide access to other community

services. When schools are closed due to events such as extreme heat, the library has served as a refuge for many who do not have air conditioning at home. As extreme weather events continue, the library can be a refuge if furnished with a generator system, allowing the location to be both an evacuation location and emergency communication hub.

Thank you,

Naomi Hupert

Sebastopol Resident

Member of LANTERN