



**Community
Learning
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**PATHWAYS INTO
COMMUNITY
CHANGE CAREERS**

**Testimony of Rosa M. García, Ed.D.
Executive Director, California Youth Leadership Corps & the Community
Learning Partnership**

**Thursday, May 4, 2023, 9:30 am
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Subcommittee, No. 5**

Chairwoman Durazo and members of the committee, it's an honor for me to join you today. My name is Rosa M. García, and I am Executive Director of California Youth Leadership Corps and the Community Learning Partnership. Thank you for your extraordinary commitment to serving and empowering marginalized students and communities across California.

At a time when many are questioning the value and strength of our nation's democracy, it is imperative that our nation and state do more to civically engage and empower historically marginalized youth. CYLC has tapped into the desires of young people to tackle critical issues such as racial and economic justice, climate change, public and community health, immigration and much more in order to create positive change in their local communities, thereby strengthening their ability to participate in our nation's democratic institutions and to help foster an equitable and inclusive democracy.

First, I want to begin by urging this committee to restore the \$20 million cut for California Youth Leadership Corps (CYLC) in the Governor's proposed budget. CYLC has developed a unique, holistic cohort-based model that prepares marginalized youth with experience in community organizing, leadership and advocacy skills, and the postsecondary credentials necessary to assume leadership roles as community organizers, change agents, and nonprofit leaders.

Integral to this model are intensive and holistic supports to promote college persistence and completion. Those enrolled in these community change learn-and-earn career pathway programs receive robust supports, including academic and



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social-emotional supports, career coaching, leadership development and mentoring to address their basic needs and connect them to good jobs once they graduate.

To be clear, this budget reduction is a threat to the success of our program because it would eliminate CYLC learn-and-earn career pathways and the number of students served by half in budget years 2023-24 and 24-25 -- right at a time when we are reaching our maximum impact. This budget cut would deny scores of historically marginalized students with an opportunity to access these career pathways; increase their economic security; receive critical supports to succeed in college and the workforce; and improve their overall health and well-being.

For the past two years, in collaboration with our partners, CYLC has worked tirelessly to pilot and ramp up community change learn-and-earn career pathways across the state. I am pleased to share that we have formal partnerships with De Anza College, East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles Trade Tech College, Los Angeles Mission College, Fresno City College, Riverside City College, and San Bernardino Valley College. In addition, three community colleges located in or near underserved communities have expressed interest in participating in CYLC. We are currently in conversation with these campuses to bring them on board.

Our community college partnerships have allowed us to make substantial progress. We have created teams with faculty and staff to build out the components of the CYLC model. First, we have worked with campuses to adjust their academic programming. Second, our CYLC pilots have developed their work-based learning internships and have identified over 75 community-based partners; and third, we are continuing to work with partners to develop intensive and holistic student supports, leadership development activities, and mentoring.

Most recently, CYLC has worked with its national partners to launch a community-based immigration legal services career pathway. This career pathway would expand the number of well-trained legal advocates, practitioners, paralegals, legal assistants, and nonprofit leaders in underserved immigrant communities. This



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partnership includes the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (CLINIC Inc.), CDSS, community-based immigration legal services organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice, and selected community colleges. Given the student demand for this pilot, CYLC intends to expand this career pathway to other immigrant communities across the state with CY funding.

CYLC has also been working to build partnerships with language justice advocates/interpreter training providers and community-based organizations led by indigenous migrant leaders to co-create a language justice career pathway which would work to increase the number of qualified interpreters in immigrant communities.

A budget cut of \$20 million would eliminate CYLC community college partnerships and the students served by half in budget years 2023-24 and 24-25. It would adversely impact our ability to offer these career pathways to 580 students who could greatly benefit from these educational and work-based learning opportunities to improve their lives. The reduction in funding would clearly impact the overall outcomes and sustainability of the initiative.

Since the inception, CYLC has served over 150 students. I am pleased to report that CYLC launched all five community college partnerships, and we have begun all activities for these programs. We expect to serve 583 students and partner with 20 community college partners with the CY funding. Over the three-year period, we plan to serve 1750 students.

CYLC experienced administrative and bureaucratic delays and challenges related to the pandemic. For example, it took longer than anticipated to have MOUs approved; departmental contracts processed and executed; and to develop a process for onboarding and facilitating payments to CYLC student interns.





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However, we have worked with our partners to resolve many of these issues. Our teams are excited and actively planning, recruiting, and interviewing students to participate in CYLC with the CY funding.

As I close, I want to share that there is interest from colleagues nationally to replicate CYLC in at least nine other states. As you are aware, California has a reputation for leading the nation in developing innovative models to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. We believe that CYLC is one of those transformative models.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. We are grateful to the committee for supporting critical investments for CYLC. In closing, I urge you to restore our funding of \$20 million in the Governor's proposed budget. My colleague, Brenda Carrillo, the Program Lead for the CYLC-De Anza College Program, will speak to the impact of our work thus far.

Thank you!

