



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***** PRESS RELEASE*****

Oakland Secures \$3.5M Grant to Enhance Community Safety

The City of Oakland and Family Bridges to Expand Safety Ambassador and Mediator Program

Oakland, CA – The City of Oakland has been awarded a grant of \$3,558,991 by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) under the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems Act (C.R.I.S.E.S. Act) Grant Pilot Program. This funding will be utilized in collaboration with Family Bridges, Inc., to significantly expand the safety ambassador program in Downtown and Chinatown, with plans to expand to Jack London Square, Little Saigon, and Lake Merritt in future years. The program deploys mediators trained in de-escalation and trauma-informed care to help people experiencing non-emergency, non-medical crises. The program proactively builds relationships with community members to co-create a safe, secure, and inclusive environment and is complementary to MACRO (Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland)..

The Oakland C.R.I.S.E.S. Act Pilot Program, administered by the Economic and Workforce Development Department, will operate through August 31, 2026. Family Bridges will prioritize its Community Ambassadorship efforts through Mediators. In addition to providing de-escalation and trauma-informed care, Mediators will extend housing/systems navigation services, establish a dedicated hotline, and actively engage with the community through street outreach, mediation, and connections to resources, as well as events and booths. The pilot program is designed to reduce law enforcement and emergency medical response to non-emergency, non-medical incidents, freeing public safety resources, including police officers, paramedics, and 9-1-1 dispatchers.

The Oakland City Council will consider the grant and program approval at the February 27th meeting of the Community and Economic Development Committee, with the potential for full City Council approval on March 6. Upon approval, the Economic and Workforce Development Department will collaborate with Family Bridges to launch the program swiftly.

The C.R.I.S.E.S. Act Pilot Program, established under Assembly Bill 118, allocates \$9.5 million in grant funds statewide to support community-based organizations in developing emergency response pilots. The City of Marin (\$1.3M), Sacramento County (\$2M), and San Cruz County (\$2.5M) also received grants. The City of Oakland secured the most extensive grant amount in the state.

Quote from Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao:

"We are thrilled to secure this significant grant in partnership with Family Bridges. This funding will empower partners with long-standing relationships in the community to help people in non-emergency, non-medical crises in a compassionate and culturally appropriate manner. Safety ambassadors free up law enforcement resources to focus on preventing and responding to property and violent crimes. Expanding the safety ambassador program supports Oakland's comprehensive community safety strategy."

Quote from Councilmember Carroll Fife:

"The CRISES Act Pilot Program is a pivotal step toward reshaping our approach to emergency response. By collaborating with Family Bridges, we are amplifying our capacity to address crises in a way sensitive to our communities' diverse needs. This initiative will contribute to building a more just and equitable Oakland."

Quote from Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas:

"This grant represents a significant investment in the well-being of our city. Family Bridges has been a trusted partner in Chinatown working with our businesses, residents and unhoused community members. Teaming up with Family Bridges, we aim to create a model that expands crisis response, helps address the root causes of crime, builds stronger community bonds, and supports law enforcement to focus their attention where they are most needed. We believe this will have a lasting positive impact on the residents and businesses of Oakland."

Quote from Corinne Jan, CEO of Family Bridges, Inc.:

"We are honored that the City has selected us to be their partner in this groundbreaking pilot. As historical responders to issues of equality and quality of life Family Bridges is up to the challenge to address the deliverables of this project: We Build Relationships. One thing that our 5 decades of direct service has taught us, is that the effectiveness and impact of any action is directly correlated with the quality of our relationships and how we achieve mutual respect and affinity. Our Mediators (Ambassadors) have set the pace for developing meaningful conversations, synergistic partnerships, and commitment to accountability from ourselves and others, to get the work done. Thank you for this opportunity. We look forward to partnering with all of our community members to achieve safe, thriving and vibrant communities in Oakland."

Quote from Viviana Rodriguez-Smith, Owner, E14 Gallery

"We opened E14 Gallery in 2016 to showcase local artists with deep ties and a strong love for Oakland. As an Oakland Native, I feel it's important to highlight our city's rich culture, and support the artists. I want to see small businesses like mine thrive. I'm happy to hear we will

have more ambassadors and mediators who will not only help to create a welcoming environment for artists and customers, but most importantly to help direct people to the services they need.”

About Family Bridges:

Family Bridges, Inc. is a non-profit organization serving the elderly, seniors, immigrants, and the disadvantaged in the Bay Area. Their Community Ambassador program in Oakland Chinatown has been instrumental in fostering humane interactions with the homeless population, formerly incarcerated, and individuals in mental health crises, ensuring safety and stabilization while promoting community well-being.

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