

Resolution Opposing Performance-Based Pay for Public Employees

WHEREAS a charter amendment has been proposed to implement performance-based pay increases for top officials in the City of San José; and

WHEREAS the Santa Clara County Democratic Party understands and supports the need to ensure government accountability and efficiency but has significant concerns regarding the practicality, fairness, and potential unintended consequences of adopting a regime of performance-based pay for public employees, including a concern that the proposal oversimplifies and misunderstands the nature of the work of government, suggesting that performance in the public sector can be measured, rewarded, and adjusted with the same precision as in a private company, which ignores the unpredictable, multifaceted, and political nature of city governance and could exacerbate the very problems it seeks to solve—inefficiency, misaligned incentives, and weakened public trust; and

WHEREAS research shows there are significant risks to adopting performance-based pay in the public sector, as affirmed recently in an op-ed authored by San Jose Councilmember David Cohen and others, including evidence that performance-based pay can shift employees' focus away from meeting the needs of the communities and constituents they serve, as informed by their own observations and expertise, and may diminish public workers' intrinsic motivation to serve their community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Santa Clara County Democratic Party opposes the proposal to place a charter amendment on the ballot to implement performance-based pay for top officials in San José and urges the City to instead focus on strengthening the accountability tools already at its disposal, including by providing adequate resources for performance evaluation.