

Attachment A:

Annual Report of the Oakland Youth Commission  
2023-2024



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## I. Oakland Youth Commission Appointees

Name	District	Officer Roles	Ad-hoc committee(s)	Years Served
Mia Hatfield	1	Co-Chair	Restorative Justice	3
Sophia Hesseltine	1	Co-Chair	Recast, YPAR	2
Haniel Kebede	1	Commissioner At-Large	YPAR; Recast	1
Sarah Turley	1	D1 Commissioner	YPAR	2
Olivia Richardson Feldman	2	Organizing Officer	YPAR	1
Ana Xu LI	2	Commissioner At-Large	YPAR; Recast	1
Calupe Kafusi	3	D2 Commissioner	CTE Hub; YPAR	1
Nathan YuHeng Li	3	Social Media Officer	YPAR	2
Quincy Russell	3	D3 Commissioner	CTE Hub; Adultism Training Facilitator	2
Areli Chavez	4	Commissioner At-Large	Youth Vote	1
Anokhi Meta	4	D4 Commissioner	YPAR; Recast	1
Bryce Hunt	4	Social Media Officer	CTE Hub; Restorative Justice	2
Katie Liang	5	Operations Officer	Youth Vote; Digital Equity; Adultism Training Facilitator	1
Steve Nguyen	5	Commissioner At-Large	YPAR	1
Michelle Wong	5	Commissioner At-Large	YPAR; Recast	1
Amber Johnson	6	Ethics Officer	Youth Vote; Digital Equity	1
Brian Morales	7	D7 Commissioner	YPAR	2

## **I. Letter from Co-Chair of the Youth Commission**

Dear City Council Members,

This marked our first full year transitioned away from COVID regulations, and we hit the ground running. We welcomed 10 new commissioners, increasing our BIPOC representation from 75% to 80% and OUSD representation from 52% to 70%. We also welcomed two new part-time staffers, Josephine Guzman and Sima Savdharia.

We started the term with our annual Fall weekend retreat orientation, learning a range of professional skills and building trust with each other that would carry throughout the year. Getting an early start on this year's projects, we held trainings on YPAR and Adulthood. In the spring, we had a second retreat, giving us more time to bond, work on YPAR, and build relationships with our newest City Council members.

Our six ad-hoc committees focused on Youth Vote, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) on Transitions to Adulthood after High School, Recast, Digital Equity, Adulthood and Youth Empowerment education, and advancing the CTE Hub.

A significant highlight this year was increased engagement with public speaking on policy issues, with 14 commissioners speaking or submitting public comments, compared to only five (5) last year. We had a few mobilizations to the City Council, Board of Supervisors, and the State Capitol to meet with elected leaders and lawmakers.

Finally, the Youth Commission fortified our collaborative role with several Oakland City Departments (Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Race and Equity, Workforce Development, Transportation, Violence Prevention, Recast) in addition to non-profit leaders (Youth Leadership Institute, Oakland Undivided). We co-hosted and participated in several City events, including the Commissioner Mixer, D5 OUSD Candidate Forum, Youth Listening Summit, City's Earth Day of Service, and Oakland Love Life Day. We upheld our long-standing coalitions with Oakland Kids First, Californians for Justice, All City Council, AYPAL, and the CTE Hub.

In the coming year, we look forward to continuing this work to develop our skills and knowledge of local government and working to improve the lives of Oakland Youth.

Thank you,  
Sophia Hesselstine  
Co-Chair of the 2023-24 Youth Commission

## Youth Leadership Development

### A. Internal Trainings

The Oakland Youth Commission (OYC) is more than just a commission, it is also a leadership development program that provides training, mentorship, and thoughtful planning to integrate young people into government affairs typically designed for adult participation.

The OYC staff planned several workshops to expand OYC member knowledge and skills necessary for their effectiveness in their roles as commissioners. Our internal workshops have become an integral component of our programming and require a considerable time commitment from our commissioners outside of regular commission meetings. The trainings we covered throughout this year were:

- Local Government 101
- Campaign Building 101
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Adulthood and Youth Empowerment
- How to Write and Give Public Comment
- Restorative Justice 101
- Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)
- Resume Writing and Building

Commissioners reflected on their growth due to their participation in OYC in an end of the year evaluation in which they reported gaining leadership skills in the following areas (percentage of youth commissioners who reported growth):

- Writing Public Comment – 94%
- Increased awareness of city issues and local politics. - 94%
- Public Speaking – 81%
- Personal confidence in sharing your ideas – 81%
- Conducting Inclusive Community Outreach – 81%
- Resume writing – 75%
- Confidence speaking with city leaders, and elected officials – 63%
- Restorative Justice Circles – 63%
- Survey Design – 63%
- Social Media Strategy and/or Content Creation – 44%
- Planning and facilitating meetings – 38%
- Focus Group Facilitation – 38%
- Participating in a campaign – 31%
- Event Planning – 25%
- Registering Voters – 19%

## B. Commission Meetings



The OYC meets every 1st and 3rd Monday, following the regular school calendar, from September-June and takes a summer recess in July and August. The OYC invited several guest speakers from the City of Oakland Departments and a few community organizations to present and educate our youth commissioners on city affairs.

One significant change this year was that lead staff, Sara Tiras, set up a pre-meeting with each presenter before they came to the commission to plan a presentation that would be interactive, engaging, and accessible for youth to learn well and be able to share their ideas in a meaningful way. Upon reflection from the prior year, and through our adultism trainings, it was evident that many adults that would come to present were not used to or familiar with how to present and interact with youth. The presentations would be difficult for our youth commissioners to pay attention to and learn from; and then when asked for ideas or feedback, they would have little to say. This was not because they didn't have ideas, but because these presentations aren't typically designed for youth audiences. This year's commission meetings were much stronger due to this pre-planning. City staff were very open and grateful for the suggested ideas, changes, and ways to adapt their presentations for youth audiences. OYC meetings included presentations and youth feedback sessions from the following:

- Oakland Love Life - Carina Lieu and Kev Choice
- Department of Transportation - Audrey Harris and Ruth Meza
- Recast Program - Desralynn Cole
- Oakland Fund for Children and Youth - Robin Love
- Oakland Undivided - Patrick Messac and Georgia Savage
- Department of Race and Equity - Amy Ferguson Yep
- Department of Violence Prevention - Dr. Holly Joshi
- Department of Workforce Development - Quinallison Dovey
- Fire Department - Brianna Horton
- CalTrans, Vision 980 Project - Becky Frank, Laurel Sears, Randolph Bell
- Cultural Strategist - Noel Ananya
- MACRO program - Elliot Jones

### **C. Youth Commissioner Accolades**

Joining the youth commission is an honor and privilege. We strive to bring together a truly diverse group of youth who represent the best of Oakland, are willing to make the commitment, and show potential for being a great team leader. Being on the youth commission is yet another way for our Oakland youth to demonstrate their excellence and build their skill set and leadership potential that make them competitive in their pursuit of their goals post high school.

We have six seniors who just graduated high school this May 2024, and were accepted to prestigious Universities and recipients of many scholarships. We are proud of our OYC Graduates' accolades:

- Amber Johnson, Graduated Oakland HS, Attending UC Berkeley
- Ana Xu Li, Graduated Oakland Tech HS, Attending UC Berkeley
  - Scholarships: Oakland Promise, Kristi Yamaguchi, PG&E Meena, Fiat Lux
  - Honors: State Seal of Biliterycy
- Brian Morales, Graduated Madison Park Academy, Attending UC Berkeley
  - Scholarships: Oakland Promise
  - Honors: State Seal of Biliterycy
- Sarah Turley, Graduated Oakland Tech HS, Attending UC Santa Barbara
  - Scholarships: Oakland Promise
- Anokhi Mehta, Graduated Head Royce, Attending Barnard University
- Sophia Hesseltine, Graduated College Prep, Attending New York University

### **IV. Youth Voice in City Affairs**

In addition to giving youth feedback and input during youth commission meetings, the Youth Commission had a few other opportunities to speak to the community and have youth voice included in city affairs.

#### **A. Leading Youth Empowerment and Adulthood Trainings in the Community**

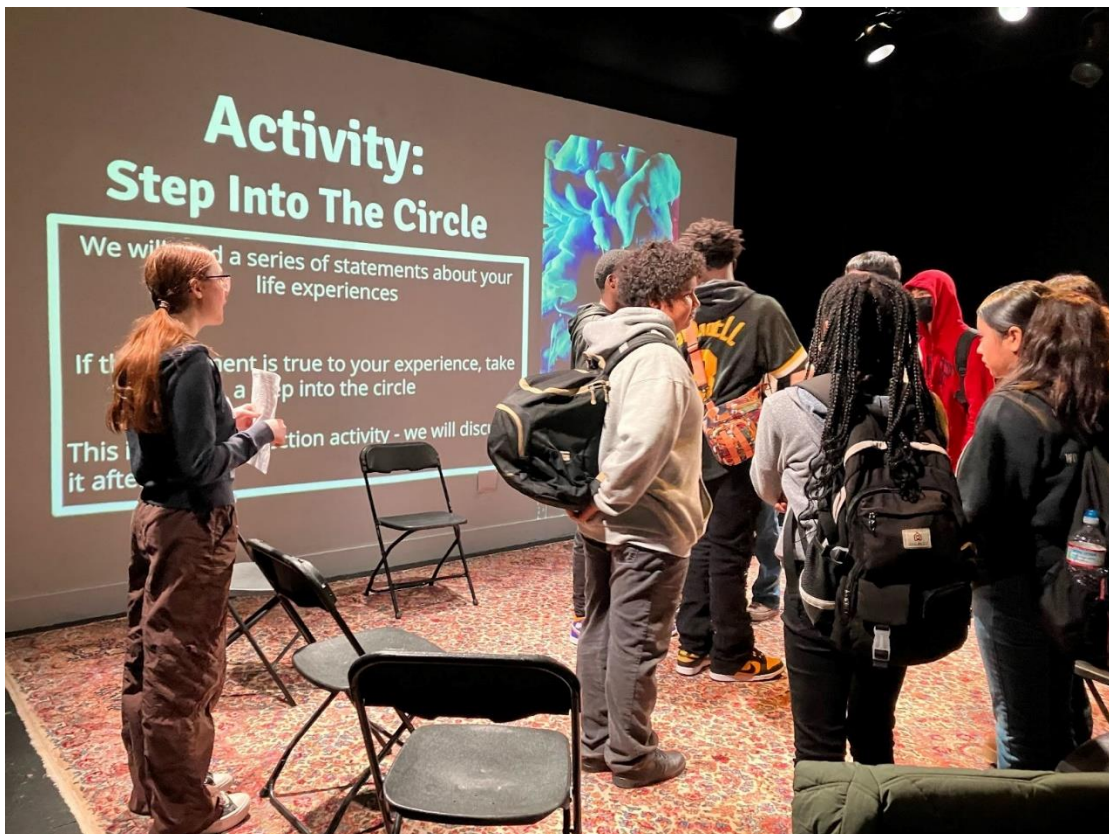
In 2023, OYC youth members and staff worked together to develop training on Adulthood and Youth Empowerment. This year we offered our second annual training for city employees and had about 25 employees participated in the training session.

This year two new youth commissioners stepped up to facilitate the training: Katie Liang (D5) and Quincy Russell (D3) along with OYC Staff, Sara Tiras. Youth presenters facilitated the discussion among participants to think about, or think back on, their perspectives as young people through conversations about times they were made to feel marginalized by adults as youth as well as times they felt empowered as young people and the difference between those experiences. The training included a breakdown of power, oppression,

intersectionality, and used Hart's Ladder of Youth Empowerment as a guide. The final component of the training provided participants with a list of ways to incorporate youth perspective in their work as adults and city employees.

OYC's second presentation was at the All City Council's Conference for OUSD Middle School Students on March 5 at Mills at Northeastern University campus. We had over 10 middle schoolers in attendance.

We hope to continue to offer the Adulthood and Youth Empowerment training annually to city employees with the goal of promoting and broadening meaningful and empowering forms of youth engagement in all city departments. We also plan to continue to present at other youth conferences such as All City Council's Student Union whenever possible.



Youth Commissioner, Mia Hatfield (left), facilitates our adulthood and youth empowerment training to OUSD Middle School students at the ACC Conference on March 5, 2024.



## **B. ReCAST Youth Board**

ReCAST, which stands for Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma, is a Federal grant program which funds youth-led projects in Oakland that address community trauma. Youth across Oakland are part of the youth-granting board to review grant proposals which are all centered on improving community health, safety, strength, and healing trauma. The mini grants awarded to Oakland Youth (ages 13-23) are up to \$5,000 each.

Desralynn Cole, Head of the Recast Program in Oakland, came to present to the Youth Commission in November 2023. Our youth commissioners were interested in the program and decided to make Recast one of our projects for the year, and four of our commissioners applied and joined the youth board. Ana Xu Li, Anokhi Metha, Michelle Wong, and Sophia Hesseltine were part of the cohort that designed the grant application and grading rubric to decide which programs would receive grants. They learned about the importance of youth philanthropy and received hands-on experience with the grant-making process. The majority of meetings were online, and the final meeting was in-person where they looked at the applications of potential contenders by analyzing their strengths and weaknesses. The Youth Board made their final recommendations for grantees and the mini grants are in the process of being awarded.

Youth commissioners were among some of the most active and consistent members of the ReCAST Youth Board, and there is interest in continuing this partnership for years to come. It seemed to be a natural fit for youth commissioners to collaborate with city programs, learn about philanthropy and the grant process, and use their leadership to empower other Oakland youth.

## **C. Social Media Engagement**

Social Media serves as a cornerstone for engaging with Oakland youth and the broader community. At the outset of the term, we established specific social media objectives, with two commissioners taking the lead in creating content for our Instagram page in collaboration with our staff. By the end of the term, we successfully gained approximately 350 new followers. Throughout the program year, spanning from September to June, we maintained an active presence by posting 58 times, averaging twice a week. Additionally, we regularly shared content from our community partners approximately three times a week, ensuring our platform remained a valuable resource for Oakland youth, offering news and opportunities.

A highlight of our social media efforts was the launch of our 'Get to Know Your Districts' social media campaign. This was aiming to educate Oaklanders about our city districts while highlighting their unique characteristics. One of our campaign highlights was when

the City of Oakland's main page shared our post, making it our most viewed of the year with 1800 views. These monthly features included a regional map of the district, information about the city council member representing that area, and a compelling 'A Week in the Life of a Commissioner' video reel, showcasing a youth commissioner from the district. Our top 'Week in the Life of a Commissioner' post reached 567 unique accounts.

Additionally, we rely on social media to engage our audience with our ongoing efforts to advocate for the implementation of Oakland Youth Vote, Digital Equity in the State, sharing updates and opportunities with Recast, CTE Hub, and our work within city government. We believe our increased enrollment and interest in joining the youth commission is also in part due to our increased social media visibility and engagement.

## V. Policy Work

### A. Oakland Youth Vote



*Oakland Youth Commissioners pose alongside other Youth Vote Coalition members at Fremont High School after the District 5 Candidate Forum was held.*

The Youth Commission continues to be an active member of the Oakland Youth Vote Coalition. As part of the Youth Vote ad-hoc committee, Areli Chavez, Amber Johnson and Katie Liang worked together with youth members of other organizations such as Oakland Kids First, AYPAL, OUSD's All City Council, and Californians for Justice to push for the proper implementation of Measure QQ and give power to Oakland youth. The coalition continued to engage youth through voter education and registration.

### **District 5's Special Election Candidate Forum**

On Thursday, October 12th, 2023, the Oakland Youth Coalition hosted and organized a student-led Candidate Forum for the District 5 Special School Board Election at Fremont High School. At the time, the two candidates for the District 5 OUSD School Board Director, Sasha Rtizie-Hernandez and Jorge Lerma, were both present. The candidates were asked questions about how they would represent students in District 5 if voted into office. Afterward, a mock election was held. Members of the audience, which consisted of a majority of youth (around 150), cast a mock ballot. Results came out roughly 2 weeks later from the mock election with most votes leaning towards Sasha Rtizie-Hernandez: 67.1% for District 5 OUSD School Board Director vs. Jorge Lerma: 32.9%.

Jorge Lerma won the election by a few hundred votes, with a very low turnout in general. While this didn't line up with our mock vote, we congratulated Director Lerma and expressed our hope to be able to collaborate. The election results indicated to us what a significant impact youth vote may have in the future considering the close margin between candidates. We are excited and hopeful about youth voters being able to influence the priorities of future school board candidates.

The Candidate Forum was covered by [The Oaklandside](#), [Great School Voices](#), [Bay City News](#), and [Oakland North](#).

### **Mobilization to the Board of Supervisors and City Council**



*Youth Vote Coalition members celebrate outside the Alameda County Board of Supervisors building in downtown Oakland, on March 26, 2024.*

On Tuesday March 26, 20 youth members from the Youth Vote Coalition (including youth commissioners: Haniel Kebede, Sophia Hesseltine, Sarah Turley, and Katie Liang along with OYC alumni Francesca Berlow and all three OYC staff) were part of a mobilization to

the Board of Supervisors to stand up for the implementation of Measure QQ. For several months, county residents had been calling in and attacking the youth vote on baseless claims of illegality, financial stress, and adultist and racist notions of youth incompetence. These residents claimed to be a part of a right-wing election fraud organization. While it appeared to be the same people giving comment regularly, we were concerned by the misinformation being spread and the lack of progress being made on the implementation of OYV.

All of our youth gave public comment and were addressed by several Supervisors afterwards who reaffirmed their commitment to implementation and thanked us for the civic leadership that we displayed.

On Thursday May 16, youth commissioners and staff along with other members of the coalition appeared before City Council's Rules and Legislation Committee to urge the completion of an MOU between the City, County, and School Board as well as an implementation Ordinance. While we were disheartened to hear some disparaging public comments about youth made and we were pleased to witness several City Council members defend youth vote, and youth leadership in government affairs.



Youth Commissioners Mia Hatfield, Katie Liang, and OUSD Student Director Vida Mendoza speak to the Rules and Legislation Committee in City Council Chambers on May 16, 2024 to advocate for the completion of the MOU to advance the implementation of Measure QQ.

### **Developing Civic Engagement Curriculum for Oakland High Schools**

As part of our work getting Oakland youth not only the right to vote, but also ready to vote, we worked on developing a civic engagement curriculum to be used in Oakland high schools.

OYC Staff, Sara Tiras, took to lead on this project drawing from her 10 years of teaching experience. The curriculum was co-written with Oakland Kids First staff Domenichi Morris, and developed with youth and staff input from our coalition's Core Leadership Committee.

Sara Tiras wrote four lessons for a one-week curriculum that could be adapted to meet the needs of any grade level or class in High School. The learning objectives for the four lessons are as follows: By the end of the week, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify what a school board does, the power they hold, and introduce students to who are the current directors and candidates running for election
- 2) Understand the history and context of the fight for Oakland Youth Vote
- 3) Articulate why youth voting is important locally and nationally as well as current political opportunities for undocumented youth
- 4) Get prepared to vote by registering in class and learning how voting procedures work (mail in ballots, polling locations, rank choice voting, etc)

In April and May 2024 Sara Tiras and other members of the Coalition conducted a focus group of OUSD High School Social Studies Teachers from various schools and grade levels to test the curriculum in their classes and give us feedback and ideas for how it could be improved. We also got student feedback from over 100 students in Oakland schools.

Overall, the pilot curriculum was a major success. Students and teachers alike reported high engagement and learning from the four lessons. In the student survey at the end, when asked if the curriculum made them more informed and excited to vote in the next election - 79% said yes, 20% are still undecided if they will vote, and less than 1% of eligible youth voters said no, they don't plan to vote. Some students also reported:

"I got to see the student passion and why it's important to give students the ability to vote. It also showed me how much effort was put into making it possible for youth to vote."

"I thought the simulation of being on the board and making decisions while listening to the opinions of the public was very useful. It helped me think of the situation from a point of view that I'm not used to and it contextualized some of the laws, systematic rules and more technical terms we'd used."

"I thought the video of opposing people's views was very interesting to see what the other side was trying to argue and if their argument holds up."

The Teacher Focus Group met twice in total. Upon completion of the group, two Skyline teachers reflected on the curriculum:

"This curriculum was fantastic. It pulls the curtain of mystery back on the school board, voting and districts. One of the recurring themes I hear from students after graduating is "I never learned about taxes or voting." This curriculum opens up one of those to

students. Voting is one of our strongest powers as citizens and this helps support making sure every student who will eventually go into the polls has some idea of how and what to expect. I highly recommend this curriculum for all students!"

"This curriculum is engaging, varied, and very clearly written by and for educators. I love the amount of intention, nuance, and attention to student voice and engagement. I'm excited that such a historic moment is being rolled out in a thoughtful and intentional way."

Teachers also shared some excellent ideas for how to further revise and refine the lessons to make them even stronger. We are currently going through the final round of revision before we publish the curriculum and make it available for free at [www.OaklandYouthVote.org](http://www.OaklandYouthVote.org) this July 2024. We have already met with OUSD District leaders and are planning to offer several Professional Development trainings, some paid through the Office of Equity, to OUSD high school teachers who are interested in using this curriculum in the Fall. We are excited to not only have worked hard to get youth the right to vote, but also to get meaningful engaging civic education into Oakland Schools to energize and mobilize Oakland youth to be lifelong voters.

The Oaklandside recently featured [this article](#) updating the public on our organizing efforts and the development of this curriculum featuring interviews with our District 5 Commissioner and Staff, Sara Tiras, on June 21, 2024.

## **B. Housing for Transitional Aged Youth**

The Youth Commission continues its commitment to advocating for homeless and housing insecure youth and young adults.

### **Youth Homelessness Task Force**

In April 2022, the Youth Commission and Youth Advisory Board advocated to City Council for the need to create a Youth Homelessness Task Force to study the particular affects and needs of youth who are experiencing homelessness. Over the next year, we continued to meet to organize and determine who could oversee the Taskforce. It was determined it made the most sense for the Youth Homelessness Task Force to come into realization through the County's Continuum of Care (COC) and the creation of a Youth Committee. Unfortunately, after several attempts to recruit new youth commissioners to hold positions on the committee, the date and time selected were determined to be during high school hours making it impossible for youth commissioners to join. The time conflict couldn't be adjusted due to a sponsoring agency who was overseeing the management of the COC was based in Atlanta along with the scheduling needs of many other people on the committee. The Youth Commission felt it was ok to step back at this

stage and were pleased that several of our partners who worked on the TaskForce would be able to join the COC and continue the work.

### Career Technical Education (CTE) TAY Hub Coalition



*Youth Commissioners Quincy Russell (Left) and Bryce Hunt (Right) join architects with Designing Spaces Designing Justice to creatively imagine what the CTE Hub housing complex design could include.*

The OYC continued to be an active member of the CTE TAY Hub, a housing complex initiative where transitional age youth who are housing insecure can live and receive a variety of resources to help them through the pivotal transition from youth to adulthood. The housing campus will provide college and career counseling, mental health services, and a variety of other wrap around services. The Youth Commission continues to work with the CTE TAY Hub coalition of over 25 organizations to plan the design of this housing project and advocate for continued investment and funding in seeing this project to fruition. We had three youth commissioners work with this coalition, Bryce Hunt, Calupe Kaufusi, and Quincy Russell. Their focus included three aspects of planning this year:

- Public comment to emphasize the impact the CTE Hub will have and reinforce support from the OUSD School Board to continue the work for the Hub. Commissioner Bryce Hunt spoke out in support of the hub and talked about the impact it would have specifically on disconnected youth of color.

- Meeting with architects to brainstorm and plan potential design layouts for the CTE Hub and consider the various services the Hub will provide.
- Conducted research and outreach to legal organizations aimed at securing legal support for future residents of the CTE Hub.

Our work with the CTE Tay Hub was the focus of [Oakland North's feature](#) story on the Oakland Youth Commission on October 11, 2023. We have been a member of the Coalition for almost three years and plan to continue to stay involved to see it through to completion.



*Youth Commissioner, Bryce Hunt, speaks to OUSD School Board to advocate for the continued investment in the CTE TAY Hub on April 29, 2024*

### **C. Digital Equity Campaign**

#### **Overview of the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative**

This year, the OYC took on a brand-new campaign and partnered with #Oakland Undivided, a local non-profit organization, to advocate for digital equity in Oakland and the State of CA through the passage of the Middle Mile Broadband initiative. This initiative would bring millions of dollars of investment in new high speed fiber broadband infrastructure into East Oakland, and specifically to our most marginalized and least connected communities in the city.

According to Oakland Undivided, “the middle mile is linked to the backbone of the internet, ensuring whole communities and regions can connect. Without a robust middle mile, last mile connections - those to homes, businesses, schools, libraries, clinics, etc. -



range from impossible to impossibly expensive. There are myriad projects across the State already underway making use of this critical resource.”

If the MMBI is completed as planned, California’s MMBI will be a future-proof network supporting connectivity in every part of the State, in all kinds of communities - urban, rural, and tribal - for decades to come. Today, 1 in 5 Californians do not have fast, reliable, and affordable connectivity. The remaining pieces of the MMBI are critical to changing that reality.

After our efforts to push for this project, Governor Newsom proposed a 2 billion investment in the state budget towards completing the MMBI. However, in the past month he suddenly withdrew the proposal after news of the budget deficits were coming to light.

### October 25 Delegation to Sacramento - Fix the Maps



On October 25, 2023, commissioners Mia Hatfield, Amber Johnson, Katie Liang and staff Sima Savdharia (pictured left) and Sara Tiras joined #Oakland Undivided on a delegation to Sacramento to visit the California Public Utilities Commission. We were there to advocate in general for digital equity and to invest in the building of new quality broadband infrastructure in communities that need it most, including East Oakland. The Public Utilities Commission uses broadband maps to justify where resources will be allocated however the maps being generated and used in the process were

clearly faulty.

Despite race and income being the best predictor of (1) whether you have access to internet, (2) how reliable it is, and (3) how much it costs, the State has generated maps that are demonstrably inaccurate and systematically serve and benefit wealthy, demonstrably served communities while woefully underrepresenting need in the highest poverty, least connected communities this funding is intended to serve.

Three commissioners spoke during public comment and gave powerful testimony about the importance of reliable high-speed internet in their ability to complete homework and

stay connected to modern day technology and services. The commission was especially moved by the comment from our District 5 representative who lives on International Blvd along the proposed Middle Mile.

Various news outlets covered the days action, here is a [video from KCRA](#), a local news station in Sacramento.

### **E-Comment: January 25 and January 26o**

On January 8, 2024, Directors Patrick Messac and Georgia Savage from #Oakland Undivided came to present to the full commission on the work to get Governor Newsome to invest in East Oakland and the push to fix the maps in determining the funding allocations for the MMBI. We followed up on January 22 with a writing workshop on writing public comment, and the full commission voted to support and submit their public comments to the Middle Mile Advisory Council and the State Broadband Council to advocate for digital equity and investing in Oakland. Their public comments were read aloud during these meetings and once again were the only youth voices included in this critical decision-making process that will affect younger generations to come. We played the recordings of these meetings at one of our Youth Commission Meetings so we could celebrate our full commission participating in writing and submitting public comment and they could hear the impact of their words.

### **April 20 Delegation to Sacramento for Digital Equity**



Youth Commissioners and Staff gather at the State Capitol on April 20, 2024, for a day of advocacy for Digital Equity with #Oakland Undivided and other state partners.

This Spring, five youth commissioners Amber Johnson, Katie Liang, Bryce Hunt, Sophia Hesseltine, and Calupe Kafusi and 2 OYC Staff members Sara Tiras and Josephine Guzman went on another delegation back to Sacramento with partners across the state from the Bay Area, Fresno and LA to

advocate for digital equity. We broke up into small groups to meet with lawmakers and

introduce them to the Governor's proposed investment in MMBI and new legislation from Assemblywoman Mia Bonta on digital discrimination.

Assemblymember Mia Bonta's new bill, AB 2239, adds a definition of "digital discrimination of access" to the California Civil Rights code that includes a disparate impact and intent as actionable. If AB 2239 passes, California will become the first state in the nation to define digital discrimination as internet service providers' business practices that have a differential impact on consumers based on their income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin, and create pathways to remedy it.

We joined together to give comments and watch the Committee on Communications and Conveyance at the Capitol discuss AB2239 which passed and was moved forward to the Judiciary Committee. Our day of action was covered in various media outlets, and our commissioners were pictured and quoted in the following article by [El Timpano](#), a local news agency that "informs, engages, and amplifies the voices of Latino and Mayan immigrants of Oakland and the wider Bay Area."

#### **D. Youth Participatory Action Research Project - Transitions to Adulthood**



Youth commissioners work on designing our survey questions (left) in March and conducting the survey at one of our four focus schools, Oakland Tech High School (right), in April 2024.

#### **Background and Origin of the Project**

In 2021-22 OYC was granted 100K from City Council to conduct a YPAR project that would review the city's funding of youth programs and identify gaps and opportunities for

investment, the scope of project was very broad. Soon after, Staff Carina Lieu left her position and a few months later, Sara Tiras came in as the new Interim Manager.

In Winter 2023, the Mayor's Office and Oakland Thrives conducted a fiscal mapping audit of City resources for youth accomplishing much of the original OYC project proposal so the project was paused again to reconsider the focus of this project and how to move forward without duplicating their research. Additionally, the City's Contracts and Compliance Division was backlogged for up to six months and no new contracts would be able to go through so the Youth Commissioners would not be able to start this project until the following term.

By Spring 2023, Robin Love joined as the new Director for Children and Youth Services. Ms. Love was able to work with staff and the Youth Commission to determine how best to implement a YPAR project with a more realistic scope and still give youth the training, leadership development, and opportunity to make recommendations to City leaders on youth issues. The Youth Commission decided that folding in the YPAR project as part of OFCY's Strategic Plan would be a natural and meaningful partnership and the YPAR project was officially launched in January 2024.

### **Goals**

We had three main goals for this project:

1. Train youth commissioners in the principles and methods of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR);
2. Provide youth leadership development through the process of data collection and presenting findings, and the opportunity to make informed recommendations to City leaders; and
3. Provide youth commissioners and POC youth commissioners the opportunity to have a voice in OFCY's Strategic Plan and shape future directions and priorities for the City.

### **Selecting a Topic**

In order to determine the focus of our research, we started by looking at the ten (10) Priorities of OFCY. Youth commissioners then voted on which one would be their two choices to focus on. Transitions to Adulthood was the top choice. OFCY has two key areas of focus within Transitions to Adulthood:

1. For Youth in Secondary Schools
2. For Disconnected Youth Not in School

Originally OYC was most interested in focusing on disconnected youth, but after considering the outreach methods and timeline of our project they decided to focus on youth in school so they could lead the data collection outreach in their schools and with

their peers. Focusing on youth outside of school would be a much more challenging population to reach and might end of being more staff and adult led effort.

In February, OYC drafted the guiding research question:

“How are Oakland Youth experiencing the transition from School to Adulthood, post-pandemic?”

### **Survey**

OYC spent a few sessions designing the survey to assess the needs of high schoolers as they transition to adulthood. OYC members asked them about job opportunities, career counseling, and how much their school aided them in their decision as to what to do after high school. OYC members spent a couple of meetings deliberating over the questions and revising them to become clear, accessible, and distinct.

### **Inclusive Community Outreach**

After the survey was finalized, we built off the knowledge presented to us from Department of Race and Equity’s presentation to develop an inclusive community outreach plan. OYC settled on launching the school at four campuses that represent the regional span of Oakland and would be sure to draw responses from target demographic populations: African American, Latinx, Immigrant and First-generation students, low-income students. These four schools were also chosen because we had youth commissioners attending these schools so they could take the lead on the survey outreach and wouldn’t need to reply on staff.

The four schools selected were:

- 1) McClymonds High School
- 2) Madison Park Academy
- 3) Oakland High School
- 4) Oakland Technical High School.

We decided to compensate survey participants with a \$20 gift card to increase the level of interest and compensate youth for their time and energy in crafting thoughtful responses.

We did classroom presentations on all four (4) campuses and collected 150 responses. The participant data indicated that we successfully reached the diverse range of Oakland youth we wanted to hear from.

The demographic details of the survey participants are as follows:

### Racial Identity

34% African American

33% Latinx

17% Asian American Pacific Islander

13% White

1% Native American

1% More than one race

### Gender Identity

50% Women

47% Men

3% Transgender or Non-Binary

### Grade

12<sup>th</sup> grade – 60%

11<sup>th</sup> grade – 40%

### Survey Findings

- 25% of survey respondents stated that their school does not offer job fairs. Of these survey respondents, 79% of survey respondents want their school to hold a job fair.
- A third of survey respondents are not hopeful about finding an enjoyable career that aligns with their interests.
- A third of survey respondents are not hopeful they can get a job that pays a living wage or a financially secure wage after high school.
- 37% percent of survey respondents are very hopeful they will find a career that will be financially stable after high school graduation. However, of these survey respondents, only 10% are Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, 59% identify as men, and 24% identify as women survey respondents who are very hopeful about being financially secure after high school graduation.
- Survey respondents of color are less connected to their school career office in comparison to White survey respondents.
- 90% of survey respondents have been exposed to internship opportunities. However, only 70% of survey respondents have participated in an internship.
- Eight out of ten survey respondents agree that students benefit from having job access opportunities throughout the year.
- One in every three (3) survey respondents do not know if there is a career office at their school. Of these respondents, 31% would like a career office in their school.
- Survey respondents overwhelmingly agree that job and internship access is important.

- Forty-one percent of survey respondents agree that the same resources are available for all students. Of these survey respondents, 56% identify as men and 25% identify as women.



Youth Commissioners Steve Nguyen, Sophia Hesseltine, and Michelle Wong work on analyzing our preliminary findings from Phase 1 of the research. May 2024.

### Focus Groups

After we received enough quantitative data, we began gathering qualitative data through focus groups. We wanted to hear about the individual experiences of youth in a setting that allowed them to tell us as much as possible,

so we set up groups at their schools and read from a set of questions we had curated a couple weeks earlier. These focus groups were held at each of the same schools, except Madison Park, and got deeper insights responses from the participants.

### Focus Group Findings

#### Oakland High School

- Focus group participants face challenges when entering adulthood, including financial concerns and lack of support when facing “real life” problems. Participants named fears of feeling “stuck” after high school and college without the proper support to navigate these challenges.
- Focus group participants identify feeling unprepared with life skills that would be helpful in navigating post-high school or college challenges. Participants name lack of resources and classes in high schools that can support their transition into adulthood.

#### Oakland Technical High School

- Focus Group participants expressed frustration with limited opportunities in tech programs at their school, leaving them feeling as if resources are not equitably distributed among Oakland high schools. Participants also expressed not having trusted adult allies in their high school that can support and prepare them for post-high school transitions.

## McClymond's High School

- Focus group participants shared that schools are not properly set up to support students transitions into adulthood. Participants say that there is a heavy emphasis on seniors when all students in all high school grades should be engaged when creating and preparing students for adulthood. Additionally, participants say that a greater importance on life skills should be placed across Oakland schools.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

- College and career counselors should create a sign-in system for everyone who visits, compile data of who doesn't visit, and reach out to those who are not being engaged by the end of 2026.
- City council can reach out to companies interested in hosting community job fairs in addition or instead of school job fairs by the end of 2026.
- OYC should conduct more research for AAPI students to find out more about resource disparities by 2026 (both groups outlined this recommendation).
- OFYC should launch an outreach campaign to inform school decision-makers of their students' desire for job resources by the end of 2025.
- City Council should allocate more funding for community-based internships to increase internship opportunities across all industries and provide easy access to these opportunities by the end of 2026.
- City Council should partner with more community-based programs and invest more into job fairs at every school within the OUSD district to increase accessibility to students by 2026.
- The Workforce Development Division can provide more access to part-time jobs that are aligned with students' interests by 2030.
- OFYC can invest more funding in community programs and schools to increase life skills classes or courses for students by 2026.

## **VI. Looking Ahead**

Some of our work has wrapped for the term and some of our long-term commitments will roll over into the next term. As is every year, the new commission will vote to approve our ad-hoc committees and core projects for the next term in September 2024.

At the end of this term, the OYC had a much larger retention of youth commissioners with only four commissioners stepping down, compared to the last several years in which we have had ten (10) or more. Additionally, we received over 50 applications from Oakland youth and interviewed 25 applicants. We will be submitting our recommendations to the Mayor for the new appointments in the coming weeks.



The Youth Commission's work with the Oakland Youth Vote Coalition will certainly continue as we approach our first ever election in which youth will be voting! We will be focused on getting our pilot Civic Engagement curriculum into Oakland schools and getting the word out to the community, so our youth are registered, informed and excited to vote! Our staff, Sara Tiras, will be leading several Professional Development trainings for Oakland teachers who want to use the civic engagement curriculum she wrote. We hosted a OYC fundraiser with the Oakland Ballers on Sunday August 18 and will host another youth-led Candidate Forum for OUSD School Board Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7 on October 22, 2024 at Fremont High School Although this is our 4th Youth-Led Candidate Forum, it will be our first one in which students will not be casting a "mock vote" because they will officially get to cast their ballots in the School Board election!

We will likely continue our long-term partnership with the CTE Hub Coalition and make sure our youth commissioners are involved in giving input on the design and planning for the Hub's services and see this innovative and exciting project through to completion.

The Youth Commission will move into Phase 2 and 3 of our Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project analyzing Oakland youth's transitions to adulthood post high school. We will continue to collect data, analyze our findings, and develop our recommendations to city departments and leaders. We plan to share our recommendations in the Spring of 2025.



## **VII. Youth Commissioner Reflections**

We conclude our report with reflections from each commissioner on what they have learned and how they have grown from their time serving as a youth commissioner.

Commissioner	<b>Mia Hatfield</b>	<b>Sophia Hesseltine</b>
Role	Co-Chair	Co-Chair
Committees	Restorative Justice, Adulthood	Recast, YPAR, Digital Equity
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>I learned a lot about how the commission works. But in particular how to plan and execute the meetings. I also learned a lot about how to be a good co-chair, for example communication skills and facilitation skills, as well for the youth commission meetings.</p>	<p>This year, I learned a lot about the inner workings of government. Whether writing public comments or designing focus groups, we put a lot of thought into what voices are typically left out of the conversation and found ways to include them. While the government has its limitations, OYC has helped me trust the government a lot more and inspired me to pursue a career in it.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I grew as a leader in so many ways, but in particular this year being my first as a co-chair for the youth commission. I learned what it takes to be a good and engaged leader for the youth commission. I also learned how to step up and step back for all of the events that we did as youth commission.</p>	<p>OYC gave me a lot of exposure to what's going on in Oakland and inspired me to be more involved as a community member. It's helped me realize the impact that my voice can have on a local scale, and that change is possible if enough of us speak up. I never realized how much impact just speaking at a City Council meeting can have, which is why it's so important to stay informed and speak up about issues that matter to you.</p>

Commissioner	Haniel Kebede	Sarah Turley
Role	Commissioner At-Large	D1 Commissioner
Committees	YPAR; Recast	YPAR
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>I learned about the many issues in Oakland and how they are addressed/resolved by our local government. I also learned how to write public comments and to be better at public speaking. Through YPAR, I learned how to collect data, create a survey, and facilitate a focus group.</p>	<p>I learned how different kinds of local government operate like the school board, board of supervisors, city council, and commissions. I also learned about how Oakland deals with violence prevention, freeway crossing design, and digital equity. Personally, I also feel like by learning about fellow commissioners through circles and games it expanded my perspective on Oakland because there are many people I would have otherwise never met in my school or social circles.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I became more confident to speak up and share my ideas. I also gained a lot of leadership skills like facilitating interviews and writing speeches/public comments. Overall, I was able to learn more about the issues in Oakland and how to advocate for their resolution.</p>	<p>In OYC commissions meetings I think I improved from last year by being more active in participating with presenters. Outside of meetings I was able to speak on youth vote in front of the board of supervisors and work with fellow commissioners on getting survey responses from students at my school for YPAR. I think I also grew in my confidence level of working with city government related things like Robert's rules, talking with officials, and public comment writing. I also think I improved more broadly on public speaking and writing persuasively. As a community member</p>

Commissioner	<b>Olivia Richardson Feldman</b>	<b>Ana Xu Li</b>
Role	Organizing Officer	Commissioner At-Large
Committees	YPAR	YPAR; Recast
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>My entire perspective on city officiating changed after just one year on Oakland Youth Commission. I learned so much about criminal justice reform, restorative justice, alternatives to police officers, giving back to the community, resisting gentrification and so much else about the efforts there are to make Oakland a better place for everyone. Holly Joshi changed everything for me and made me want to make that a career for myself, as well as the Cal Trans people trying to give the land back to the people that were on it before the construction of the 980 freeway. I learned so much about the work that it takes to run a city, and the incredible people who do not do it for fame, but instead for the people.</p>	<p>I learned about City programs such as the Oakland Fund for Children and MACRO, which gave me a new perspective on responding to emergencies that I hadn't previously known about. I also didn't know of the concept of public comments, but this year, I was able to write a couple myself and hear them read out loud. When it comes to the YPAR project and developing the survey, I really enjoyed the discussions we had, which reminded me how much the small details matter in creating the atmosphere for the survey people want to complete, such as how questions are grouped and in what order. Lastly, the visitors, such as Oakland Undivided, introduced issues I didn't know about, such as the Broadband for All initiative.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I grew so much as a leader and community member by taking the information I was provided at meetings, actions, and training to help other Oakland residents have hope for the future of the city. If there is one thing that I will forever take with me from Oakland Youth Commission, it is that there is so much good in Oakland, and so many dedicated people who are striving for a better city. I was able to combat some of my peers' statements with other solutions that I was learning about in Oakland</p>	<p>The Commission provided ample leadership opportunities that extended beyond the Commission itself. Although I primarily engaged in the smaller opportunities, it helped me accommodate and feel comfortable taking on more opportunities out of my comfort zone. The meetings aided me in becoming a much more aware community member who could inform others, such as my fellow students at school. While helping organize various projects like the YPAR surveys and focus groups, I also found myself interacting and checking on multiple people at school I hadn't seen or talked to in a</p>

	Youth Commission, which also gave them hope for the future of the city.	while as I started engaging some more there, too.
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Commissioner	Calupe Kafusi	Nathan YuHeng Li
Role	D2 Commissioner	Social Media Officer
Committees	CTE Hub; YPAR	YPAR
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	Being on the Youth Commission really showed me what little power youth have in the community. Over the months of being on the youth Commission I've seen that everyone has something to say. I gained knowledge and new experiences from being on the youth Commission.	During my time with the Youth Commission, I gained invaluable skills that I learned from my peers and from the staff on the commission. I loved communicating with everyone in order to collaborate on various city related projects within the commission and hearing everyone's input as well as perspectives. Through my participation in YPAR, executive committee, and co-facilitating RJ circles, I was able to expand my own view as a youth in the city of Oakland and help to apply what experiences I gained to the community.
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	When I joined the commission, I had very little experience with public speaking. Over time I was kinda forced to speak in front of others and speak professionally. Being on the commission really improved the public speaking skills I had and now I feel comfortable speaking in front of others.	

Commissioner	Quincy Russell	Brian Morales
Role	D3 Commissioner	D7 commissioner
Committees	CTE Hub; Adultism Training Facilitator	YPAR
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>While being a part of the youth commission I learned a multitude of different skills and insights, including how to communicate my ideas, voice those thoughts, and effectively take feedback and apply in situations. One example of me communicating my ideas was with the CTE Hub where we gave input on different resources we should offer in the housing project. Secondly, I had the opportunity to give the annual report to city council, facilitate the adultism training and table at the youth climate summit, all of which I was able to speak to city leaders about how we could improve our city.</p>	<p>While on the Youth Commission, I learned a lot about city government and the way things get done. I initially did not know about all the different departments that come together to make up the city government and all the different boards/commissions. The guest presentations helped a lot with opening my eyes to everything that is going on inside city hall and across the city. I also gained a lot of insight from my fellow commissioners, as they introduced me to new perspectives that helped us make more informed decisions. Not only this, but I also learned a lot of skills that contributed to my personal development.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I was able to grow as a leader in my confidence and my advocating in support of people around me. First, the annual report was huge for my confidence as it allowed me to speak in front of a large crowd and share events and actions I care so deeply for, something I wasn't able to do before. Secondly, while in my talks with students and people around the city/ country I am now able to always step up and call out something when I find it hurting those affected.</p>	<p>Through my participation in our commission meetings, committees, actions, and training, I grew as a leader in lots of ways. The main way I grew as a leader was with the constant empowerment to speak up for what we believe is right. I now feel more confident in my ability to speak up on the issues my community faces than before my participation on the youth commission. The subjects we were trained on and held training for were also very eye-opening and empowering. For example, the adultism training was eye opening because it is something I knew existed, but didn't know if there was a name for it or if something could be done about it.</p>

Commissioner	Anokhi Meta	Bryce Hunt
Role	D4 Commissioner	Social Media Officer
Committees	YPAR; Recast	CTE Hub; Restorative Justice
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>My experience on the Oakland Youth Commission has given me so much valuable knowledge. The biggest way this commission has benefitted me has been by providing me with so much information about the city. For every commission/organization that visited our meetings, I learned so much more about the intricacies of how a city works. The transportation centers and Dr. Joshi in particular taught me about how much goes into making decisions within a city.</p>	<p>A major thing I learned during my time on the commission is just how much power we have as youth. It is often easy to feel helpless and unable to make change due to our age, but from the many organizations and initiatives that have reached out to us, it is evident that youth are such a major part of representing and advocating for people's experiences and struggles.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I grew as a leader mostly through being a member of our youth participatory action research program, where we sent out a survey to assess need amongst high schoolers in Oakland public schools transitioning to adulthood. This taught me how to lead a focus group, how to effectively speak to kids my own age, and how to collaborate with others to formulate a survey. I also grew as a leader through our team bonding exercises, where I felt more comfortable speaking out and expressing my ideas.</p>	<p>Being on the executive committee definitely grew my leadership skills a lot. I got a lot better at planning meetings, delegating tasks, and facilitating. I also got a lot more comfortable with speaking to public officials, due to giving public comments at the CTE TAY Hub, and advocating for digital equity with Oakland Undivided at the Capital.</p>

Commissioner	Katie Liang	Steve Nguyen
Role	Operations Officer	Commissioner At-Large
Committees	Youth Vote; Digital Equity; Adulthood Training Facilitator	YPAR
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>The Youth Commission has provided me with deeper insights into local city government and politics. Being on the Oakland Youth Vote Committee, I have gained a lot of knowledge about MeasureQQ. I have learned specifically about the delays in the implementation, the advocacy, and the impact this will have on Oakland youth with MeasureQQ. Additionally, the Youth Commission has opened my perspectives on issues in Oakland that are impacting youth relating to education, mental health, and violence.</p>	<p>I've had the opportunity to learn a lot the past few months and developed perspective, knowledge, and insight on city issues and local policy. I learn a lot about using my voice to help represent the needs of myself and of youths in my community to other local city departments and community organizations. I've learned the importance of using voices and expressing stories of youths to represent the urgency in issues that must be addressed. I had hands-on opportunities to work on designing surveys and facilitating focus groups to better engage with my community and represent the diverse perspectives of Oakland youths.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>Over this term, as a leader, I have taken on the role of Operations Chair while assuming the role of District 5 Representative. I have been part of many actions to help represent my district such as Sacramento Digital Equality Advocacy days, Oakland Youth Vote Board of Supervisors Mobilizations, and public comments to the City Council. As a community member, I have gotten to know other commissioners better through fun activities and co-lead a training on Adulthood for City of Oakland employees.</p>	<p>I was able to grow as a leader and community members being able to have this amazing opportunity to work with my talented peers and staff members who come into every commission meeting with passion, kindness, and a desire to uplift the community and make it a more positive place to live. I had many opportunities to develop skills that I would use in many other opportunities and careers moving forward that would allow me to become a more confident, personal, and aware citizen, student, and community member. This opportunity allowed me to continue building my desire to make my community a better place.</p>



Commissioner	Michelle Wong	Amber Johnson
Role	Commissioner At-Large	Ethics Officer
Committees	YPAR; Recast	Youth Vote; Digital Equity
What did you learn from being on the OYC?	<p>OYC has provided me with many amazing experiences from the committees I have been involved with and the opportunities given. I was able to be directly involved with the YPAR project of learning how to create a well-designed survey, presenting the survey, having people take the survey, analyzing data, and conducting focus groups. I learned about youth philanthropy through Recast which showed me its importance and the process of grant-making. In addition to committees, I learned how to write public comments and a resume. Overall, I gained exposure to politics and local government which has helped my awareness on community issues.</p>	<p>I definitely learned a lot while on the commission, but I would say the most memorable thing I learned was about the violence prevention program in Oakland &amp; also digital discrimination. I think I've been pretty woken up about major issues that go on in Oakland because a lot of them are a reality of mine of some kind but learning that there are so many efforts of reform to Oakland was really insightful &amp; made me appreciate my city even more.</p>
How did you grow as a leader and community member?	<p>I grew as a leader and community member through my participation in OYC through writing public comments for digital equity. It felt extremely empowering to be providing public comment to important issues and topics. Additionally, the training hosted by OYC helped me gain more confidence in myself and knowledge.</p>	<p>I was able to grow as a leader/community member because I was able to uplift the voices &amp; experiences of the people within my community who are typically overlooked &amp; underrepresented in advocacy spaces. In the commission meetings especially, I was able to talk about my experiences in our discussions which I feel is really important because it diversifies people's perspectives.</p>