

The **Californian**

Monterey County Board of Supervisors approves nearly \$5M for COVID-19 program

By Angelica Cabral - Salinas Californian

Monterey County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to continue a program aimed at educating residents who are most at risk of contracting COVID-19.

On Monday, the board was asked to choose between a three- or six-month extension of the COVID-19 pilot program.

After hearing several presentations, Supervisor Mary Adams made a motion to expand the COVID-19 Community Outreach and Education Pilot Program for 6 months.

"This is more than really important stuff... this is the biggest thing that we have ever been charged with doing," Adams said. "If we don't step forth in a strong, resolute way, I don't think that we're going to succeed."

The county intends on funding the program with \$1 million coming from contingency funds, \$1 million coming from the strategic reserve, and \$2.9 million coming from the Cannabis Tax Assignment.

A three-month extension would have cost roughly \$3 million.

Supervisor Chris Lopez highlighted the tax revenue brought in by the cannabis industry, many of whose members are in his district.

"I want to thank them for stepping up, for continuing to be partners with us through this pandemic," Lopez said. "They're proud of the fact that so many different media stories have covered where this funding is coming from and the fact that they're having a positive impact on our community."



Supervisor Jane Parker did request county staff to come back with more details regarding how funds will be spent. There will be a monthly presentation for reviewing the project, including looking at the metrics, such as how the project is going.

Earlier this year, Monterey County, along with several partners including the **Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action, COPRA**, and Building Healthy Communities (BHC) launched the COVID-19 pilot program.

So far, the county has trained 45 community health workers.

The project is dedicated to providing community outreach and educating the public, specifically those residents in the lowest quartile of the Healthy Places Index, HPI Census Tracts.

Initially, the Monterey County Office of Community Engagement and Strategic Advocacy staff said they would recommend three months of funding to continue working with neighborhoods affected by COVID-19.

However, the public comments were overwhelmingly in favor of a six-month rollout. Andrea Manzo, of BHC, spoke in support of the \$4.9 million, six-month proposal.

"I'm happy to hear that the six-month time frame resonates with all of you," Manzo said. "It has been clear that there is inequitable access to these resources by those disparately affected by COVID."