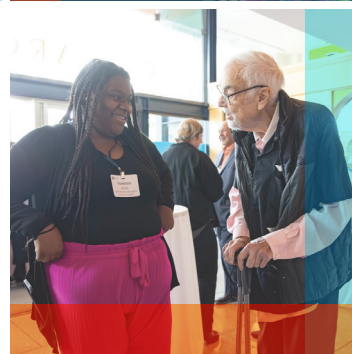
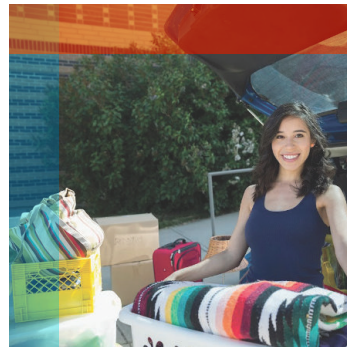
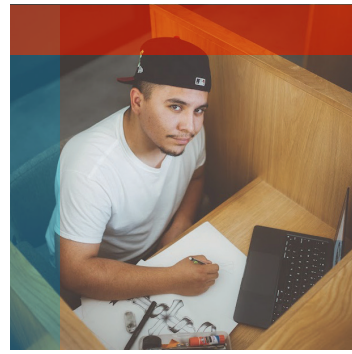


2025-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN

# JOHN BURTON ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH



# CALIFORNIA HALL OF FAME



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# INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to share with you the John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) strategic plan for 2024-25 through 2027-28.

This plan was developed through a collaborative process that engaged our full range of partners: youth, nonprofit service providers, foundation and individual supporters, elected officials, campuses and public agencies. Together, we have charted a path forward that sets an ambitious plan for JBAY.

The foundation of this plan is a bold, 10-year goal: to reduce the equity gap for postsecondary educational and career attainment among youth and young adults impacted by foster care and housing insecurity by half and the number of youth experiencing homelessness by half.

The current three-year plan moves the organization in this direction. This plan focuses on the strategic initiatives that are most pressing for the young people we serve and for JBAY as an organization:

- 1. College & Career Pathways,**
- 2. Housing & Economic Mobility,**
- 3. Sustaining and Growing JBAY's Influence and**
- 4. Organizational Development.**

Learn about the goals set forth in these four areas and the specific steps JBAY will take to achieve them below.

We are excited to share JBAY's roadmap for the next three years and invite you to be part of this important change. Together, we can ensure youth who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness have the opportunity to thrive in young adulthood.

Sincerely,

John Burton, Founder

John Garcia, Board President

# WHO WE ARE

JBAY improves the quality of life for youth in California who have been in foster care or homeless by advocating for better laws, developing systems change solutions, training communities to strengthen local practices and conducting research to inform policy solutions. JBAY works to achieve this mission by conducting four main activities:



## BUDGET & POLICY ADVOCACY

JBAY advocates for statewide budget and policy reform to create a better, brighter future for foster and homeless youth in California. Advocacy at JBAY takes a variety of forms, including educating elected officials about the needs of youth who have been in foster care or homeless, sponsoring state legislation, informing the development of regulations, and designing long-term systems change strategies at the local level.



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & TRAINING

JBAY collaborates with local government partners, college campuses and community-based organizations across California to train them on best-practices and to ensure that policies adopted at the state level are fully implemented locally. JBAY's technical assistance and training takes a variety of forms, including providing no-cost one-on-one consultation, developing and delivering educational curricula, creating and disseminating toolkits, conducting regional workshops, hosting web seminars, and organizing "communities of practice."



## RESEARCH

JBAY conducts research to develop smart, targeted policy solutions and to determine whether adopted policies have had their intended effect. JBAY has a deep commitment to using evidence to guide its policy and technical assistance and issues an average of 10 publications annually. These publications provide a deep look into the issues facing youth who have been in foster care or homeless and ensure that scarce public and private resources are used effectively.



## DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO YOUTH

JBAY understands that policy change requires time, which is why the organization launched the Critical Needs and Opportunity Fund. This program provides direct financial assistance to over 1,600 young people annually who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness.

These activities are conducted by the JBAY staff, based in San Francisco and also located in Los Angeles and San Diego. JBAY also has a dynamic group of eight young adults who serve as youth advocates and play a pivotal role in the success of the organization. They bring valuable firsthand experiences from their time in foster care or facing homelessness. JBAY is governed by a 14-member board of directors, who bring a diverse set of professional and personal expertise to inform the work of the organization.

# OUR HISTORY

JBAY was founded in 2005 by John Burton, who served as a member of the United States Congress, the California State Assembly and the president pro tempore of the California State Senate. The organization was originally named the John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes and its focus was on helping serving children and youth experiencing homelessness by making grants to community-based organizations that serve them.

In 2006, the focus of the organization changed to advocacy, drawing on John Burton's extensive knowledge of the state legislative process and his breadth of relationships in Sacramento and beyond. The first bill that JBAY sponsored was Senate Bill 1576, authored by Senator Kevin Murray, which expanded transitional housing for former foster youth statewide. Since then, JBAY has successfully advocated for 54 major reforms, including extending foster care to age 21, increasing access to financial aid, expanding support for parenting youth and creating a specialized tax credit for foster youth, the nation's first.

For the first 11 years the organization was a fiscally-sponsored project of Community Initiatives. In 2016 JBAY became an independent nonprofit, hired its first official executive director

and established a formal board of directors. It was at this time that the organization's name changed, from the John Burton Foundation to John Burton Advocates for Youth.

Programmatically, JBAY's focus has also evolved. Its first focus was addressing the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care. Over time, JBAY has placed significant emphasis on ensuring access to post-secondary education and promoting economic mobility. In 2019, JBAY formally expanded its focus beyond youth who were in foster care to include the larger, closely related population of youth and young adults who have experienced homelessness.

Following the pandemic, JBAY deepened its work with youth by formalizing its youth advocacy program. This program ensures that the voices of youth who have been in foster care or homeless are integrated into JBAY's work.

Today, JBAY is a well-established non-profit organization with a highly expert staff, diverse board of directors, informed and supported youth advocates and committed collection of individual and foundation supporters. Thank you for being part of our journey.

# OUR PROGRAMS

JBAY's work is divided into three programmatic areas: **College and Career Pathways, Housing, and Economic Mobility**. College and Career Pathways works to improve postsecondary access and completion rates for youth who have experienced foster care or homelessness and set youth up with sustainable career pathways. Housing works to expand solutions to youth homelessness to reduce the number of young people who become unhoused. Economic Mobility works to expand the available financial resources for foster and homeless youth to support long-term stability. Provided below is a short description of efforts underway in each program.

## College and Career Pathways



**College & Career Preparation:** JBAY ensures youth are prepared for college and career by advocating for policy change and developing resources that can be used by professionals to assist youth to explore their postsecondary options and to ensure that they are well-equipped to pursue their goals.



**Financial Aid Application Completion:** JBAY works with County Offices of Education and school districts to ensure that high school seniors who have experienced foster care or homelessness are afforded every opportunity to successfully complete their applications for financial aid and access available funding.



**Expanding Financial Aid:** JBAY advocates for better access to financial aid both by expanding the amount of aid available and supporting policies that enable students facing challenges to maintain their access to financial support.



**Campus Support Programs:** JBAY successfully advocated for an expansion of support programs for foster youth to every public postsecondary institution in California and continues to support robust program implementation.



**Student Homelessness:** JBAY has been at the forefront of efforts to address college student homelessness, including obtaining an annual state allocation to create housing programs for homeless students that JBAY supports with ongoing technical assistance.



**Education in Los Angeles County:** To address the needs of over one third of the state's foster youth who reside in Los Angeles County, JBAY operates the Foster Youth College Advancement Project, under the umbrella of the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative, which works to improve postsecondary access and success for foster youth in LA County.



**California College Pathways Funders Alliance:** JBAY facilitates the California College Pathways Funders Alliance, a diverse group of philanthropic partners who come together to share information, identify strategic investment opportunities and move the data collection and research agenda of the initiative forward.

## HOUSING



### **Supportive Housing for Foster Youth:**

Through advocacy, technical assistance, training and research, JBAY works to make sure housing remains in reach for youth who have been in foster care. This work has led to countless young people who would have otherwise faced the prospect of homelessness moving into safe, stable and affordable housing.



### **State Investment in Youth Homelessness:**

JBAY advocates for youth to secure an equitable share of state-level investments in addressing homelessness, including a successful campaign for a 10 percent set-aside for youth in California's recent major investments in addressing homelessness.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY



**Reducing Poverty:** JBAY cosponsored a proposal that established the California Foster Youth Tax Credit, providing a \$1,000 refundable tax credit to current and former foster youth. JBAY provides ongoing technical assistance to maximize uptake of this benefit.



### **Burton Critical Needs and Opportunity**

**Fund:** JBAY provides direct cash aid through organizational partners to address the critical needs of foster and homeless youth. By filling the gap created by challenges such as housing emergencies, a car breaking down, an emergency medical expense, and more, this fund ensures that a one-time crisis does not result in a lifetime of hardship.





## WHO WE IMPACT

JBAY's work is designed to impact **young people aged 13-26** who have **experienced foster care or who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless**. These populations experience some of the greatest challenges of all Californians, often facing complex trauma, financial insecurity and the lack of a social safety net. The lives of these children and youth are deeply impacted by the systems that surround them, including the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and homelessness response systems.

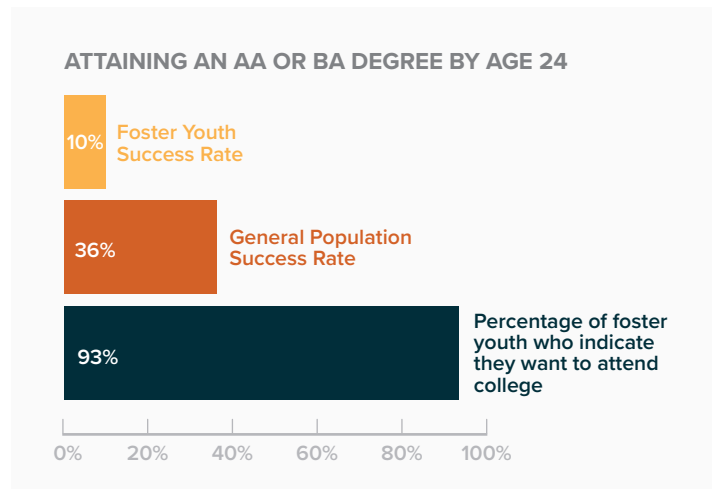
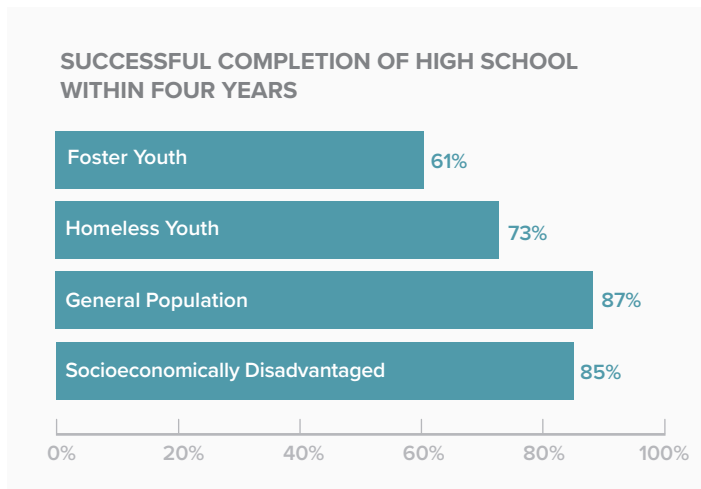
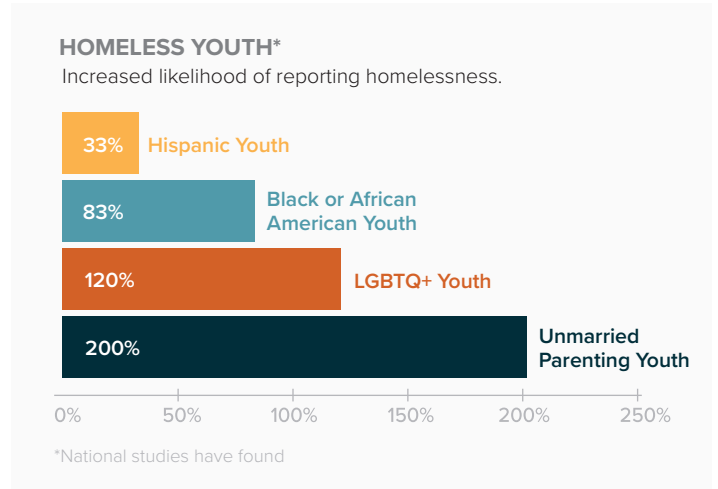
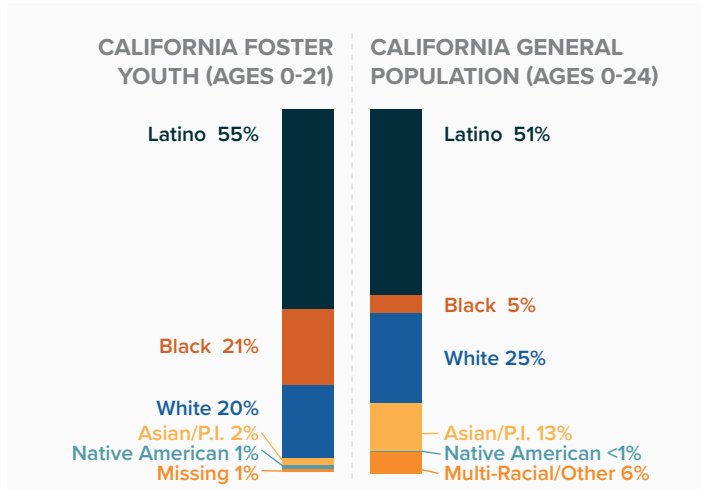
The youth impacted by JBAY's work are overwhelmingly youth of color. Youth who identify as Black or African-American are significantly overrepresented in both the foster and homeless youth populations and nearly eight in ten (79%) youth in the foster care system are youth of color.

According to recent studies, LGBTQ+ youth are also overrepresented both in foster care and among youth experiencing homelessness. Thirty percent of foster youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning, and 5% as transgender. LGBTQ+ youth are at more than double the risk of homelessness compared to non-LGBTQ+ peers and among youth experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+ young people reported higher rates of trauma and adversity, including twice the rate of early death.



# Demographics and Needs of Young People Impacted by Foster Care and Homelessness

As of April 2024, records showed the following demographic breakdown of the children and young adults served by California's child welfare system. These young people face multiple barriers to housing stability, educational attainment and careers that offer a path to economic security.



Among 18- to 25-year-old youth experiencing homelessness, the **likelihood of completing any college credits** is half that of other students.

The rate of college student **homelessness among foster youth is more than double** that of other students.

Homeless youth are at a **far higher risk** than their housed peers for substance abuse issues, poor health, and unemployment.



## PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

In January 2024, JBAY initiated the current strategic planning process. The planning process came at an important time, as JBAY approached its 20th anniversary. It had achieved many significant accomplishments for youth, yet the challenges they face continued to increase due to a range of political and economic factors, including California's serious housing crisis.

This significant anniversary was an important opportunity to ask ourselves a series of key strategic questions, including:

- 1 ? Are JBAY's programs focused on the most pressing challenges facing youth?
- 2 ? What threatens JBAY's ability to address these challenges?
- 3 ? What strategies can JBAY deploy to address these threats and ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization?

Through a series of activities, JBAY addressed these questions and developed the current strategic plan. These activities included:

- 4 2 Full-day staff retreats
- 5 13 Board member interviews
- 6 11 Interviews
- 7 1 Board retreat
- 8 7 Strategic planning committee meetings

The current strategic plan builds on the strengths of JBAY while also recognizing areas that require development. By focusing our efforts on activities that align with our strengths and the needs of the community, JBAY can create significant and meaningful impact.

# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The current strategic plan provides clarity for the next chapter of JBAY’s work, through June 2027. This clarity included reaching consensus on what will remain unchanged: JBAY will continue to focus on improving the lives of transition-age youth, aged 13 to 26, who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness in California.

Programmatically, JBAY sharpened its focus through the strategic planning process. College and Career Pathways replaces the more general “education” program. This refined name better reflects JBAY’s long-standing commitment to increasing access to career education, not exclusively degree attainment. Additionally, the Housing and Economic Mobility Program, replaces the Housing and Health Program. This change reflects JBAY’s extensive work to promote tax filing among foster youth and a decreased level of activity in strictly health-related work.

JBAY will work towards its 10-year goal of reducing the equity gap for postsecondary educational and career attainment among youth and young adults impacted by foster care and housing insecurity by half and the number of youth experiencing homelessness by half by focusing on four strategic priorities. Two strategic priorities address the content of the work to be conducted, while two address the conditions under which the work is conducted.

## These strategic priorities include the following:



### **COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS**

Expand the availability of support and resources necessary for all unaccompanied homeless youth and youth with experience in foster care to successfully pursue postsecondary and career pathways that result in economic mobility and well-being.



### **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

Reduce youth homelessness in California by 30%, from 11,219 in 2023 to 9,349 in 2026.



### **SUSTAIN AND GROW JBAY’S INFLUENCE**

Grow JBAY’s field influence strategically to achieve progress on the 10-Year Goal and to proactively mitigate known risks including turnover in the legislature and administration.



### **ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Strengthen JBAY’s organizational capacity consistent with staff- and board-identified needs to make progress on and achieve its 10-year Big Goal.



## Strategic Priority #1

Expand the availability of support and resources necessary for all unaccompanied homeless youth and youth with experience in foster care to successfully pursue postsecondary and career pathways that result in economic mobility and well-being.

Access to postsecondary education and training remains the key to unlocking not only economic mobility, but a variety of other positive outcomes such as better health, greater civic engagement and a greater likelihood of job satisfaction. Young people recognize the value of higher education, with 93 percent of foster youth expressing a desire to attend college, however significant barriers remain to both access to these opportunities and success rates once enrolled. JBAY has made great strides in recent years, most notably the expansion of campus support programs for foster youth across all three public postsecondary systems, significant increases to the availability of financial aid for foster youth, new requirements at community colleges to address student basic needs, and the development of an innovative approach to addressing student homelessness through student-focused rapid rehousing. More, however, must be done to reduce ongoing equity gaps.



## Strategic Priority #1

Expand the availability of support and resources necessary for all unaccompanied homeless youth and youth with experience in foster care to successfully pursue postsecondary and career pathways that result in economic mobility and well-being.

To improve access to college and career opportunities JBAY will:

- 1. Increase career education awareness:** Increase awareness among youth and stakeholders around Career Education pathways.
- 2. Identify best practices:** Identify and elevate best practices for supporting foster youth to graduate high school and successfully transition to postsecondary.
- 3. Support high school to college transition:** Based on identified best practices, design and implement a strategy to increase direct college enrollment from high school, support the transition and reduce summer melt.
- 4. Improve child welfare/probation capacity:** Improve child welfare/probation systems' capacity for and orientation towards supporting postsecondary access and success for youth with experience in foster care.
- 5. Support homeless K-12 students:** Develop and implement a strategy to address needs of homeless K-12 students with a focus on unaccompanied homeless youth, with a goal of creating parity in support access.

To improve outcomes such persistence, retention and graduation rates, JBAY will:

- Increase the availability of financial aid:** Increase access to financial aid for JBAY's target populations through policy opportunities that could include increasing access to the Student Success Completion Grant, Middle Class Scholarship, Cal Grant and CalKIDS programs.
- Expand foster youth student access to housing:** Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that students with experience in foster care have access to adequate housing.
- Ensure quality implementation of foster youth campus support programs:** Identify and scale best practices to ensure that college-based support programs such as NextUp are working effectively.
- Address college student homelessness:** Develop, refine and implement strategies to address the holistic needs of homeless college students, which may include scaling college-focused rapid rehousing programs.
- Expand access to financial aid:** Support implementation of new policies related to financial aid access such as student focused Satisfactory Academic Progress and Cost of Attendance policies.



## Strategic Priority #2

Reduce youth homelessness in California by 30%, from 11,219 in the 2023 Point-in-Time Count to 9,349 in the 2026 Point-in-Time Count.

California is in the midst of a housing crisis, with housing costs increasing an average of 40% since 2018. Youth who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness are disproportionately impacted by this crisis for a variety of reasons, including the lack of assistance from extended family, educational delays and complex histories of trauma. JBAY is committed to developing solutions to ensure that youth who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness have the opportunity to live safe, stable lives and that their unfortunate experiences early in life do not have the effect of creating lifelong homelessness and poverty.

In the current strategic plan, JBAY takes two approaches towards this goal. The first is a series of housing solutions to increase public funding for housing specific to youth who have been in foster care or homeless. These housing solutions include strengthening housing options for youth in foster care, expanding subsidies for youth exiting foster care and increasing state investment to address youth homelessness. The second approach in the strategic plan is to increase the capacity of youth to remain stably housed by increasing their income. The primary strategy in this area is to increase utilization of specialized tax credits, which have a demonstrated ability to increase youths' income and reduce their rates of poverty.



## Strategic Priority #2

Reduce youth homelessness in California by 30%, from 11,219 in the 2023 Point-in-Time Count to 9,349 in the 2026 Point-in-Time Count.

The strategic plan sets six objectives to develop housing solutions.

- 1. Collect data and conduct research on foster youth homelessness:** JBAY will develop an approach to identify rates of homelessness among current and former foster youth, including expectant and parenting youth. This may include modifying existing homelessness data collection systems to match with state-level foster care data or facilitating a second Voices of Youth Count or longitudinal study similar to the CalYOUTH Study.
- 2. Increase access to foster care placements that provide supportive services:** JBAY will increase access to foster care placements that provide supportive services. This may include estimating the number of Transitional Housing Placement for Nonminor Dependents (THP-NMD) slots required in the highest population counties and advocating in each of those counties to increase their slots to this figure.
- 3. Improve functionality and stability of the Supervised Independent Living Placement:** JBAY will identify administrative obstacles for foster youth placed in Supervised Independent Living Placements and advocate for strategies to improve the functionality of this placement to prevent homelessness.
- 4. Increase access to family settings for older foster youth:** JBAY will promote connections with families for older foster youth to broaden stable placement options for nonminor dependents. This may include identifying strategies to increase utilization of resource families for nonminor dependents.
- 5. Increase access to subsidized housing for former foster youth:** JBAY will increase access to subsidized housing, particularly via federal housing vouchers. This may include calculating the number of housing vouchers California needs for former foster youth and conducting technical assistance and advocacy on the state and county levels to secure it, including identifying additional funding to provide supportive services associated with these vouchers.
- 6. Establish public funding for addressing youth homelessness:** Without an existing designated permanent funding source for housing for youth who are not systems-involved, JBAY will identify strategies to stable public funding for addressing youth homelessness. This may include advocating for funding from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program, or identifying other state funding for homelessness that may be modified to include a youth set-aside.

The strategic plan sets two objectives to increase economic mobility.

- 1. Promote awareness and outreach about tax filing and tax credits:** JBAY will identify strategies to increase awareness of state and federal tax credits among current and former foster youth, especially the California Foster Youth Tax Credit. This may include increased engagement with county child welfare agencies regarding tax filing.
- 2. Increase access to and uptake of the California Foster Youth Tax Credit:** JBAY will facilitate an increase in the number of youth claiming the California Foster Youth Tax Credit by at least 50%. This may include identifying state-level verification obstacles and advocating for addressing them and improving access to year-round free tax filing assistance.



### Strategic Priority #3

Grow JBAY’s field influence strategically to achieve progress on the 10-Year Goal and to proactively mitigate known risks including turnover in the legislature and administration.

For its 20 years of existence, a key ingredient to JBAY’s success has been maintaining a high level of influence in the field. A portion of this influence has been derived from John Burton personally, based on his 40+ years of political know-how and his well-established relationships with California elected officials and many more. This influence has grown due to the expertise of JBAY staff members, who are deeply knowledgeable about the policy-making process and content related to transition-age youth in California. The JBAY board of directors has contributed significantly to JBAY’s influence, serving as high-impact ambassadors and making critical connections that ensure JBAY’s success.





### Strategic Priority #3

Grow JBAY's field influence strategically to achieve progress on the 10-Year Goal and to proactively mitigate known risks including turnover in the legislature and administration.

To ensure JBAY maintain and grows its influence, JBAY will engage in the following activities over the three-year strategic plan:

- 1. Strengthen presence in Sacramento:** JBAY will strengthen and expand its influence with key stakeholders in Sacramento through a range of strategies such as holding an annual event in April and meeting with new legislators to educate them about JBAY issues.
- 2. Improve the infrastructure of JBAY's grassroots support:** JBAY will improve its capacity to quickly and effectively mobilize its network of grassroots support by developing information systems that increase mobilization of grassroots support, including campuses and nonprofit service providers.
- 3. Leverage programmatic activities to expand influence:** JBAY will expand the scope of existing activities to achieve the goal of expanding influence. Examples of existing activities that can achieve this goal include the semi-annual Blueprint Conference, the Los Angeles graduation event and regional in-person technical assistance events.
- 4. Increase engagement with Youth Advocates:** JBAY will expand its utilization of its team of Youth Advocates to communicate the need for policy change and the impact of policy proposals. This may include increasing staffing to better support the management of the Youth Advocate function.
- 5. Develop framework to engage key stakeholders:** JBAY will develop an approach to formally engage high value political stakeholders and develop an individual plan to foster, grow, and nurture the relationship. This may include an advisory board or similar structure.
- 6. Expand presence in Los Angeles:** JBAY will expand its presence in Los Angeles, which is home to the largest number of youth who have been in foster care or experienced homelessness, by recruiting LA-based board members, holding events in Los Angeles and working actively and intentionally with the Los Angeles delegation of elected officials.



## Strategic Priority #4

Expand JBAY’s organizational capacity consistent with staff-and board-identified needs to make progress on and achieve its 10-year Big Goal.

JBAY’s dedicated staff and board members are the driving force behind the organization’s achievements. With a team of 14 board members, 10 staff members and 8 youth advocates, JBAY has operated efficiently, with a lean structure in our administrative, human resources, finance, and operations departments. Our collective efforts have enabled us to make significant strides towards our mission. .

To help achieve our 10-year goal of reducing the equity gap for postsecondary educational & career attainment among youth and young adults impacted by foster care and housing insecurity by half and the number of youth experiencing homelessness by half, the strategic plan proposes to expand and strengthen our organizational capacity on multiple levels. JBAY aims to enhance its organizational functions by addressing key areas: human resources, communication, leadership team and facilities.



## Strategic Priority #4

Expand JBAY's organizational capacity consistent with staff-and board-identified needs to make progress on and achieve its 10-year Big Goal.

To expand our organizational capacity, JBAY will engage in the following activities over the three-year strategic plan

- 1. Assess and address organization's need for a Human Resources function:** JBAY will engage an HR consultant to assess and recommend whether to add an in-house HR staff member or continue outsourcing, prioritizing senior-level staff growth in Development and Communications, Finance, and Operations.
- 2. Communications Assessment and Planning:** JBAY, with a Development Director in place, will engage a strategic communications firm to assess its external communication needs and develop a plan targeting donors, foundations, advocates, and policymakers to support its 10-Year Big Goal.
- 3. Leadership Succession and Talent Development Planning:** JBAY will implement an internal process to plan for leadership departures and develop a talent strategy to enhance leadership and skills among staff.
- 4. Develop the Board of Directors:** Over the three-year Strategic Plan period, JBAY will conduct annual board assessments to set yearly development priorities and create leadership succession plans for the Board Chair and Committee Chair roles, with the Governance Committee determining and ensuring progress on these priorities and accountability on these priorities.
- 5. Cultivate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB):** JBAY will engage a DEIB consultant to assess and recommend priority actions for cultivating DEIB principles, starting with staff and eventually including Board members.
- 6. Assess and Address Organization Need for Scalable Facilities:** JBAY will assess what the organization needs in the physical space function as it is poised to grow in staffing.



# JOHN BURTON Advocates *for* Youth