**Issues Assembly Voting**

The below issues are the areas residents have lifted up as concerns to focus on. The responses came from the intake form filled out by residents when joining the council as well as in one-on-one conversations between residents and the TCM team or during trainings where residents have shared together. Some issues have been identified as similar or identical as other responses, and categorized below. Please use this information to make an informed decision about voting on which top 5 areas the Fresno Residents Council will focus on during the next year.

**Academic Success**

*Concerns about student academic performance. We recognize that students from low-income backgrounds and students of color often face greater challenges in achieving academic success in comparison with their white classmates. We also know that educational opportunities can impact a person’s economic opportunities throughout their lives by affecting what jobs they are able to fill later in life. We must understand some of the causes of this opportunity gap so that we can ensure that low income and students of color are not left behind in the economy tomorrow by ensuring student success today. Some examples of academic success areas of focus include:*

* Quality of public education/ schools
* Increasing academic achievement among low income students
* Interventions for special/ high need student populations

**Access to Adequate Public Services & Infrastructure**

*Public services- which includes everything from our roads and freeways to our public libraries and trash pickup and much, much more- affects the quality of life for every county resident, though access can be limited to those who live in isolated parts of the county, or places where the tax base is limited. In recent months, the US Congress has taken major steps to address how our public and human infrastructure is funded; we must work together to determine how these resources will be distributed equitably throughout our county. Some examples this area of focus include:*

* Access to public services- in both rural and urban areas
* Quality of public infrastructure- roads, sidewalks, crosswalks, signage and signals
* Addressing racism in law enforcement
* Improved public transportation and infrastructure

**Childcare**

*For many parents, affordable and high quality childcare options are out of reach. This has a tremendous negative impact for both the parents, many of whom are in or trying to reenter the workforce, and children, especially since we now know that early childhood development is directly linked to outcomes in later life. Residents would like to work with decision makers to define how we can expand access to high quality and affordable childcare options for Fresno families. Some examples of childcare areas of focus include:*

* Access to affordable childcare
* Access to high quality childcare
* Compensation for childcare providers
* Access to existing childcare programs & eligibility requirements

**Digital Literacy & Access to Technology, especially High Speed Internet**

*Now, more than ever, technology has become essential for how we live, work, and go to school. Particularly, during the pandemic, we saw how low income communities were disproportionately impacted by lack of access to technology, and high speed internet. Even when institutions took remarkable steps to provide the technology, some communities remained limited in their ability to use that tech. We need policy solutions that address this problem, especially for the highest need populations in Fresno. Some examples of digital literacy areas of focus include:*

* Access to technology
* Support with digital literacy
* Access to devices in the home
* Access to high quality devices for learning
* Access to affordable high speed internet
* Access to high speed internet in rural areas

**Support for Children with Disabilities (and their families)**

*Having a child with a disability is a daunting challenge faced by thousands of families in our community. Parents often find themselves having to navigate complex systems and laws that require them to go above and beyond to ensure that their children have access to even the most basic support. We need to work closely with systems leaders and elected officials to identify ways to ease this process for parents to access basic support throughout the county- in both urban and rural communities. Some examples of disability support areas of focus include:*

* Advocacy for young children with disabilities
* Advocacy for students with disabilities
* Expanded supports for parents of children with special needs

**Environmental Justice**

*The quality and availability of our natural resources is an issue that touches every person in our community. Many of our communities still struggle with access to clean drinking water, and the entire valley suffers with the quality of our air, seen especially during our devastating wildfire seasons of recent years. Further, these challenges overwhelmingly impact lower income communities throughout the county. We need to work together with systems leaders to better understand what we can do to address this problem now, so as to improve the quality of life for all Fresnans, and preserve our natural setting in the shadow of some of the most amazing natural wonders of our land. Some examples of environmental justice areas of focus include:*

* Environmental justice
* Access to clean drinking water
* Addressing air quality issues

**Healthy Communities**

*We know that a healthy diet and exercise are key to achieving a longer, better quality of life for most, however in some communities- predominantly low-income communities and communities of color- healthy food options are not readily available. In some communities, you may have liquor, smoke shops and fast food on every corner, but you can go miles before seeing a grocery store. It may also be harder to find a park and other greenspaces that families can access to promote active living that are safe, and have desirable amenities (ie. playground, exercise equipment, lighting and security). Some examples of healthy communities areas of focus include:*

* Addressing food deserts/ access to health food options
* Increasing healthy options in neighborhoods
* Expanded access to parks, green-space
* Expanding exercise opportunities for children

**Housing**

*For many families, the price of housing- rent and home purchase- is going up, but wages remain stagnant, which puts access to adequate housing (ie, enough space in a home, pathways to homeownership) out of reach. Some are forced to remain in smaller living space with a growing family while rents increase, and the prospect of home ownership is just a dream and never a reality- which not only impacts the renter, but we know that home ownership is correlated with outcomes for children later in life. Some examples of housing areas of focus include:*

* Access to affordable housing
* Services for homeless families
* Rising rents & rent control

**Mental Health**

*During the pandemic, we witnessed a large increase in suicide attempts and calls for help among youth in Fresno; while we’re still learning the nature of this challenge, we know that children and families face unique pressures that stress their relationships and their ability to achieve academic and economic goals (ie, success in school and work). Fresno families need access to affordable and high quality mental health supports which will help them meet the needs of today. Some examples of mental health areas of focus include:*

* Mental health supports for children & adolescents
* Mental health supports for adults
* Access to existing mental health programs

**Schools as a Community for All**

*We know that many families, especially in low income communities, have come to rely on their neighborhood schools to help meet their needs in crisis; one clear example is during the pandemic when schools fed needy families regardless of whether they had a child enrolled or not. While that reality played out, schools struggled to navigate this role, especially since they are funded specifically to support student learning. In recent months, the CA state government has affirmed a commitment to imagining new models of community schools which can fund and potentially address how schools can become safe and trusted hubs of community support. We need to work closely with decision makers on how we can design and implement new models for how schools become hubs of their neighborhood communities and meet some of the most pressing challenges schools face today. Some examples of schools as a community areas of focus include:*

* Advocacy for English/ Dual Language Learners
* Addressing racism in education
* School safety
* Over-policing of schools

**Workers Rights & Economic Opportunities for Families**

*While our work is centered on the wellbeing of Fresno’s children, we know that many of the greatest challenges to childhood wellbeing are related to the economic security and opportunities of parents. Income and socio-economic status correlate with student achievement, access to supports, and can directly predict the socio economic status of children in the future - the strongest way to predict the economic status of a child is to look at the economic status of their parents. In order to address the economic needs of children, we need to address the economic opportunities available to their parents. Some examples of workers rights & economic opportunities for families areas of focus include:*

* Employee rights
* Advocacy for agricultural workers
* Equitable economic development