



MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA  
**SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
Keeping the peace since 1850

**Tina M. Nieto**  
Sheriff-Coroner

May 19, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to offer support to the Monterey County Behavioral Health (MCBH) proposal for MESA Innovations funding for the Rainbow Connections project. Within law enforcement, we have seen how the COVID-19 Pandemic has only increased the baseline of mental health needs faced by LGBTQ youth in our county. Our youth and families need additional options to turn to for information and support during times of mental health difficulties. In 2021 MCBH launched a Mobile Response Team program that provides support in the community for children and youth in crisis, which has helped to reduce unnecessary engagement with law enforcement. LGBTQ youth all too often fall through the cracks and don't receive the early intervention services and support they need which leads to far more severe and critical mental health conditions. We are pleased to know that MCBH plans to expand its continuum of services for LGBTQ youth and their families.

To support these proposed programs, the Sheriff's Office will work with MCBH to support youth in crisis to be diverted, when appropriate, to these programs rather than ending up in hospitalization or Juvenile Hall. This will include educating our workforce on the purpose of these programs and how to support families in accessing them. Providing community education and support that fosters acceptance is critical for safe and healthy communities in Monterey County to thrive. Our department is in full support of MCBH's Rainbow Connections project.

Sincerely,

Tina M. Nieto  
Sheriff-Coroner