



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors – Fifth District and Fourth District

Subject: First Report and Recommendations of the S.H.I.E.L.D. Ad Hoc Board Subcommittee

Meeting Date: March 10, 2026

Formal Title: Consider first report and recommendations of the ad hoc Board Subcommittee to Safeguard Health, Inclusion, Essential Services, and Local Defense (S.H.I.E.L.D.), approve in concept an “Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors Adding Chapter 10.07 to the Santa Cruz County Code to Prohibit the Use of County Property for Civil Immigration Enforcement”, and take related actions.

Recommended Actions

1. Accept and file a report from the ad hoc subcommittee of the Board to Safeguard Health, Inclusion, Essential Services, and Local Defense (S.H.I.E.L.D.) on its preliminary findings and recommendations;
2. Approve in concept an “Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors Adding Chapter 10.07 to the Santa Cruz County Code to Prohibit the Use of County Property for Civil Immigration Enforcement”;
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to schedule the ordinance for second reading and final adoption on March 24, 2026;
4. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the Notice of Proposed Ordinance Summaries in a newspaper of general circulation at least five days prior to the scheduled second reading and final adoption, no later than March 19, 2026, pursuant to Government Code Section 25124; and
5. Direct the S.H.I.E.L.D Subcommittee to report back to the Board of Supervisors on or before May 19, 2026.

Executive Summary

On January 27, 2026, the Board of Supervisors authorized the establishment of an ad hoc Board subcommittee to Safeguard Health, Inclusion, Essential Services, and Local Defense (S.H.I.E.L.D.) in the context of increased federal immigration enforcement actions and federal budget cuts to services that disproportionately impact our immigrant community.

The S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee was directed to report back to the Board of Supervisors on or before March 10, 2026, with preliminary findings, identified near-term actions, and a proposed workplan and timeline for any policy items requiring further analysis or Board consideration. Accordingly, the Board of Supervisors will receive a report from Subcommittee members Supervisor Martinez and Supervisor Hernandez and consider the initial recommended actions of the S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee.

Discussion

The S.H.I.E.L.D. Ad Hoc Subcommittee was established to support Santa Cruz County's coordinated, lawful, and timely preparedness in response to increased federal immigration enforcement actions. Its focus is on internal County preparedness, including:

- Reviewing and strengthening County department protocols related to immigration enforcement encounters in County facilities.
- Identifying legal, operational, and policy gaps that may affect service access or County compliance with state and federal law.
- Assessing continuity of essential services, including health, social services, and public benefits.
- Exploring funding strategies and resource needs related to service access and community stabilization.
- Coordinating with other local jurisdictions, school districts, and regional partners on preparedness and response.
- Developing potential policy recommendations for Board consideration.

The Subcommittee will not:

- Replace or direct community based rapid response networks.
- Conduct or coordinate field response to immigration enforcement activity.
- Serve as a public reporting or emergency response hotline.
- Adopt new County policy without Board action.

Since its approval on January 27, 2026, the S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee has conducted an initial review of County policies and operational protocols and has identified both near-term administrative actions and longer-term policy considerations, as outlined below.

Reviewing and Strengthening Department Protocols

1. Department Protocols and Level of Preparation

In 2025, the six County departments most likely to be impacted by federal immigration activity developed and/or updated policies and procedures on how to prepare for and interact with immigration enforcement officers. The S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee reviewed these protocols from the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, Health Services Agency, and Human Services Department.

The County Executive Office is currently working with the Safety Officer in the Human Resources Department to finalize clear procedures for all County staff when approached, questioned, or observed by external parties (including immigration or other federal law enforcement agents, protesters, and independent journalists) during work duties, to help protect employee and client safety and ensure interactions are handled in a legally appropriate, consistent manner. Upon finalization, this policy will apply to all Santa Cruz County departments and sites except those operated by the Sheriff's Office and Probation Department. The Safety Officer will also implement Countywide training to ensure all employees understand and consistently apply these protocols.

2. Data Collection and Privacy

Over the last year, the County has heard from many members of the public who expressed concern about what data the County collects and how that data is shared. On December 17, 2024, the Board adopted Resolution 279-2024 reaffirming the County is a welcoming community and a place of trust and safety for all immigrants and ordering that:

- Santa Cruz County resources are not used to enforce federal immigration law that targets individuals simply based on their immigration status, gather or disseminate information regarding the immigration status of individuals, or collect personal information unless explicitly required by federal or state statute, regulation, or court decision; and
- County departments review their confidentiality policies to prevent eligible individuals from being discouraged from seeking services or engaging with County resources based on immigration status.

Pursuant to this resolution, County staff do not inquire into an individual's immigration status for immigration enforcement purposes. County staff avoid inquiring into immigration status unless it is legally required and/or used to provide services addressing unique challenges, needs and goals. When such information must be collected, staff explain how it will be used and protected under applicable confidentiality laws.

Many Santa Cruz residents expressed particular concern about the possibility that data collected by Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras – such as FLOCK cameras – is being shared with the federal government. The County of Santa Cruz does not utilize ALPR cameras within its jurisdictional boundaries. However, the Sheriff's Office does have access to a state intelligence center that includes data collected by ALPRs in other districts, including cities within Santa Cruz County. The data accessed through the state intelligence center is subject to the restrictions imposed by California Senate Bill 54, which prohibits sharing ALPR data with federal authorities, for immigration enforcement purposes. Access to the data by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office is strictly limited to a right-to-know basis directly related to investigations.

Dado el nivel de preocupación sobre cómo las fuerzas del orden están utilizando los datos —ya sean creados por el Condado o no—, la Directora Ejecutiva del Condado ha solicitado que nuestro Inspector General realice una auditoría de las políticas de la Oficina del Sheriff relacionadas con el acceso al centro estatal de inteligencia y el cumplimiento de dichas políticas. Dicha auditoría se encuentra dentro del alcance del trabajo contemplado en el acuerdo existente con el Inspector General.

3. Use of County Owned or Controlled Property for Immigration Enforcement Action

In 2025, federal guidance rescinded prior limitations on immigration enforcement at or near “sensitive locations” where people access essential services¹, including schools, courts, and medical facilities. Over the past year there has been an increased tendency for these spaces to be used by federal agents as staging areas and operation bases as they carry out immigration enforcement actions. Many of these spaces are owned or

¹ Rebecca Santana. *Trump Administration Throws Out Policies Limiting Arrests of Migrants at Sensitive Locations*. AP News. (Jan. 21, 2025) Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-enforcement-sensitive-locations-trump-ab0d2d2652e9df696f14410ebb52a1fc>

controlled by local government.

The Board of Supervisors has repeatedly taken the position that the detention and deportation of Santa Cruz residents solely on the basis of their immigration status interferes with the mission and values of the County of Santa Cruz² to cultivate a healthy, safe and more affordable community that is culturally diverse, economically inclusive, and environmentally vibrant. A relationship of trust, respect, and open communication between County staff and residents is essential to advancing the County's mission of delivering efficient public services and cultivating a prosperous economic environment, opportunities, and high quality of life for all residents. Civil immigration enforcement activities undermine community trust, spread fear, and create barriers to accessing essential services.

Across the Country and California, other jurisdictions that also find civil immigration enforcement actions to be counterproductive to their goals have made efforts to prevent the use of their property for that purpose. The S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee reviewed a half dozen examples of such policies and ordinances and recommends taking similar action by adopting the proposed "Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors Adding Chapter 10.07 to the Santa Cruz County Code to Prohibit the Use of County Property for Civil Immigration Enforcement" referenced in **Attachment A**. County resources should not be used in ways that undermine service delivery or public trust.

The proposed ordinance would prohibit the use of County-owned or County-controlled parking lots, open spaces, and buildings as staging areas, processing locations, or operations bases for federal civil immigration enforcement activities to the extent permissible by law. It would not prevent the lawful discharge of duties in compliance with a lawfully issued judicial warrant or other order evidencing a judicial determination of probable cause on or in County-owned or County controlled property.

This policy would direct the County Executive Office to develop protocols to ensure that, wherever appropriate, physical barriers such as locked doors and gates are used to limit access to County-owned and County-controlled parking lots, open spaces, and buildings.

Potential costs may include staff time to identify County-owned and County-controlled sites appropriate for signage and access controls. The County Executive Office will return to the Board of Supervisors with a cost estimate for consideration and approval if necessary.

Approval of this proposed ordinance would be consistent with prior Board positions asserting that Santa Cruz County resources shall not be used to enforce federal immigration law targeting individuals based solely on immigration status³; the *California Values Act* (SB 54); and Resolution #26-09, adopted by the County Office of Education

² Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. *Resolution 279-2024: Resolution Establishing the County of Santa Cruz's Commitment to Maintaining Trust and Safety for Local Immigrants*. (Dec. 17, 2024) Available at <https://santacruzcountyca.igm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=4&ID=59435>

³ Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. *Resolution 279-2024: Resolution Establishing the County of Santa Cruz's Commitment to Maintaining Trust and Safety for Local Immigrants*. (Dec. 17, 2024) Available at <https://santacruzcountyca.igm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=4&ID=59435>

on February 19, 2026, which prohibits the use of education facilities and parking areas for civil immigration enforcement activities.⁴

Together, these actions reflect a structured approach to strengthening internal County systems, reinforcing legal compliance, and maintaining uninterrupted access to essential services.

Working with Our Community Partners in an Ongoing Evaluation of Service Continuity Risks

In addition to reviewing internal County policies and protocols, the S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee has initiated engagement with community-based organizations, legal service providers, educational partners, and local jurisdictions to assess service continuity risks and coordination needs.

This engagement is intended to ensure that County administrative actions are informed by on-the-ground conditions and that County efforts complement, rather than duplicate, existing community-led response structures.

1. Convening on Federal Impacts

On February 27, 2026, the County convened community-based organizations (“CBOs”), legal service providers, education representatives, health providers, and local jurisdiction partners to assess the impacts of federal policy on Santa Cruz County residents, including impacts that disproportionately affect immigrant communities.

The Subcommittee sought input regarding:

- Community level impacts and barriers to accessing services;
- Gaps in communication, outreach, and service delivery;
- Input on potential policy and operational approaches; and
- Coordination between County efforts and community based responses.

Key themes that emerged from the convening included:

- The need for a centralized, publicly accessible source of information clarifying County policies, facility protocols, and legal boundaries.
- The importance of uniform signage and consistent messaging across County and city facilities to reduce confusion.
- Concerns regarding declining utilization of medical, dental, food distribution, and public benefit services due to fear and misinformation.
- Interest in ensuring safe and accessible public spaces where community members can assemble and organize.
- Requests for clearer understanding of what guidance, if any, dispatch systems can provide when individuals encounter federal agents in the field.

⁴ Santa Cruz County Office of Education. *Resolution 26-09: Prohibiting Use of Santa Cruz County Office Of Education Indoor and Outdoor Facilities and Parking Areas for Any Forms of Civil Immigration Enforcement Staging, Processing, or Bases for Operations*. (Feb. 19, 2026) <https://santacruzcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Resolution-26-09-Prohibiting-Use-of-Santa-Cruz-COE-Indoor-and-Outdoor-Facilities-and-Parking-Areas-for-Any-Forms-of-Civil-Immigration-Enforcement-Staging-Processing-or-Bases-for-Operations.pdf>

- The importance of non-digital communication channels and dissemination of information through trusted community-based partners.

County departments have begun assessing service utilization trends and related indicators to identify potential early warning signs of service avoidance or disruption.

2. Other Outreach Efforts

In addition to the February 27 convening, Supervisors Martinez and Hernandez and their staff have engaged with advisory bodies, rapid response networks, and service coordination groups to ensure alignment between County administrative actions and community-based response efforts.

These engagements have included attending meetings of the Latino Affairs Advisory Commission, Your Allied Rapid Response (YARR), the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), the South County Triage Group, and the Santa Cruz Immigration Coalition communications team.

The purpose of this engagement is to:

- Clarify the County's role and boundaries;
- Identify areas where County policy alignment can reduce confusion;
- Avoid duplication of community-led rapid response efforts; and
- Surface emerging service access concerns.

Input from these discussions continues to inform the Subcommittee's near-term and long-term priorities.

3. Interagency Coordination

While the Subcommittee's initial focus has been internal policy review and administrative alignment, effective preparedness requires coordination across jurisdictions.

Future work will include structured communication with cities, school districts, the County Office of Education, higher education institutions (including UC Santa Cruz and Cabrillo College), the Pajaro Valley Health Care District, Monterey County, and relevant special districts.

Interagency coordination will focus on:

- Promoting consistency in facility protocols and public messaging;
- Sharing best practices and lessons learned;
- Identifying cross-jurisdictional service continuity risks; and
- Reducing duplication of effort in a resource-constrained environment.

Strengthening these relationships in advance of potential operational challenges enhances clarity, stability, and coordinated service delivery across the region.

Working with Our Regional Partners

Federal immigration activity and related policy shifts do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries. For that reason, the S.H.I.E.L.D. Subcommittee has prioritized regional

coordination to promote consistency, share best practices, and reduce cross-county confusion.

Since its formation, Supervisors Martinez and Hernandez, County Executive Officer Coburn, and support staff have participated in regional discussions focused on preparedness, service continuity, and interagency alignment.

1. *Coordination with Federal and State Representatives*

On January 29, 2026, both Supervisors' offices participated in a regional roundtable convened by Congressman Jimmy Panetta, which included law enforcement leaders, health and human service providers, and employers from Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. The discussion focused on operational impacts, service continuity concerns, and coordination across agencies serving immigrant communities.

Participation in these conversations ensures that local conditions and service delivery realities are reflected in broader policy discussions.

2. *Latino Caucus of California Counties*

Supervisors Hernandez and Martinez are active members of the Latino Caucus of California Counties, which convenes regularly to share information and coordinate responses among counties facing similar impacts. These discussions provide opportunities to exchange policy approaches, identify legal considerations, and assess emerging statewide trends.

3. *Belonging to the Bay Regional Convenings*

Santa Cruz County has participated in multi-county convenings involving Bay Area and Central Coast jurisdictions to share strategies related to federal immigration activity and service continuity planning.

These convenings are focused on:

- Comparing facility protocols and ordinance approaches;
- Aligning communication strategies;
- Sharing lessons learned from jurisdictions experiencing federal presence; and
- Identifying areas for regional collaboration.

Pursuant to Board direction on January 27, 2026, the County Executive Officer has designated key staff to participate in upcoming regional meetings and interim working groups to ensure sustained coordination.

The engagement and policy review described above reinforce that preparedness requires both internal clarity and coordinated external communication. Community partners have emphasized the importance of consistency, transparency, and clearly defined County roles.

Next Steps

The Subcommittee's next phase of work will build on the internal policy review and stakeholder engagement described above. Actions will proceed in phases based on legal review, operational readiness, and available resources.

1. Internal Readiness and Training

- Finalize and implement the Countywide protocol governing staff engagement with immigration enforcement officers.
- Begin department-level training to ensure consistent application of deescalation procedures, documentation standards, and legal boundaries.
- Develop a Concept of Operations (CONOP) to clarify County roles, interdepartmental coordination, and communication pathways in the event of significant federal immigration activity. The framework will adhere to state and federal law, incorporate community-informed perspectives, and focus on mitigating service disruption without interfering with federal authority.

2. Safeguarding Access to Services and Facilities

- Advance the proposed ordinance regarding use of County-owned and County-controlled property, together with fiscal analysis and implementation guidance.
- Assess facility-level signage and access protocols to ensure consistency and clarity following Board direction.
- Monitor service utilization trends across health, public benefits, behavioral health, and food distribution programs to identify potential early indicators of service avoidance or disruption.

3. Community-Focused Stabilization Measures

- Formalize a recurring Community Roundtable structure to maintain direct communication with trusted service providers and to assess evolving service continuity risks.
- Develop outreach materials for small businesses to clarify their rights and responsibilities in relation to federal immigration enforcement activity on private property.
- Explore options to support community-based partners who provide direct services to impacted residents, including coordination on capacity needs and potential funding strategies.
- Identify non-digital methods for disseminating accurate information through trusted community channels.

4. Interagency and Regional Coordination

- Continue structured coordination with cities, school districts, higher education institutions, special districts, Monterey County, and regional partners to promote consistency in facility protocols and public messaging.
- Engage appropriate law enforcement leadership and dispatch partners to review emergency response considerations and clarify life-safety priorities during federal operations.
- Participate in ongoing multi-county convenings to share best practices and assess emerging operational impacts.

The Subcommittee will provide updates to the Board as implementation progresses and will return with additional policy or funding recommendations as warranted.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of implementing the proposed “Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors Adding Chapter 10.07 to the Santa Cruz County Code to Prohibit the Use of County Property for Civil Immigration Enforcement” is not known at this time, but is expected to be limited. Potential costs may include staff time to identify applicable

County-owned and County-controlled sites, develop and install signage where appropriate, and implement related administrative protocols.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety

Submitted By:

Monica Martinez, Fifth District Supervisor, and Felipe Hernandez, Fourth District Supervisor

Recommended By:

Nicole D. Coburn, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.