



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060-4073
(831)454-2000 | www.santacruzcountyca.gov
Nicole D. Coburn, County Executive Officer

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Contact: Jason Hoppin

Jason.Hoppin@santacruzcountyca.gov



BOARD ADVANCES ORDINANCE TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved in concept an ordinance establishing the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as an ongoing framework for promoting gender equity in County government.

Consistent with the County's existing Equity Framework, the proposed ordinance formalize the County's commitment to identifying and addressing gender disparities in government programs, services, employment practices and decision-making. Under the proposed ordinance, County departments would consider gender equity as part of existing planning, budgeting, policy development and program evaluation processes where relevant and appropriate.

The action builds on several years of work by the County's Women's Commission. In February 2024, the Board reaffirmed Santa Cruz County's designation as a CEDAW County and directed the Commission to identify priorities and develop recommendations to advance gender equity. In September 2025, the Commission presented 11 recommendations, including adoption of a local CEDAW ordinance to strengthen accountability and transparency. The ordinance would:

- Require relevant County departments to incorporate CEDAW initiatives and measurable action items into their existing Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Responsiveness plans.
- Direct the County Executive Office to coordinate implementation and report to the Board of Supervisors at least once every three years.
- Maintain the Women's Commission's advisory role in advancing gender equity.
- Encourage consideration of gender disparities in County programs, workforce practices and public services.

CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and establishes international principles for eliminating discrimination against women. Although the United States has not ratified the convention, local governments across the country have adopted measures incorporating its principles into municipal and county operations. The Board will consider the ordinance for second reading and final adoption on October 20.

