

Dear Mayor Dyer and Fresno City Councilmembers:

Since 2018, we as faith leaders from across the city have been strong proponents of bringing Advance Peace (AP) to Fresno. Due to the program's overwhelming success in other cities, as well as the initial reduction in retaliatory gun violence here in our own community, we continue to strongly support this program.

We understand that the City supports and implements multiple departments and programs that aim to keep our community safe, but we also know that the City alone cannot bear the burden of community safety. Effective safety strategies and long-term solutions require local leaders, elected officials, NGOs, and community change agents working together to bring lasting peace and prosperity in all our neighborhoods. This type of robust coalition building and prioritization of neighborhood relationships is the foundation of Advance Peace and the reason for its success.

In June of 2020 we celebrated as the City Council, amidst heightened scrutiny, voted to approve not just initial funding for AP, but a partnership between the City of Fresno and community leaders to end gun violence. We were in full agreement with the Commission for Police Reforms recommendation to 'support community-based violence prevention and sustainability of Advance Peace through multi-year funding.'

AP was awarded \$950,000 from ARPA funding by the City Council on 12/13/21, then Rep. Costa secured the program \$300,000 in federal dollars in Community Project Funding. With growing support and leveraged funds, we were thrilled knowing that AP was now well-equipped and empowered to catalyze effective change in Fresno.

When the news broke that Advance Peace lost its federal funding due to the City's unwillingness to accept and allocate the resources, we were disappointed and discouraged. Now that we've learned the Mayor's office not only failed to distribute the approved \$950,000 in ARPA funds, but is now trying to reallocate those dollars for its own version of a community violence program, we are outraged.

Let us be clear, we support Advance Peace because this specific model works. We supported the program back in 2018 and we support the program today. We call on the Mayor's office to transfer the pre-allocated funds of \$950,000 to Advance Peace by July 31st, 2022. We also call on the Mayor's office to allocate additional resources to replace the Community Project Funding that it lost due to inaction.

The safety and lives of the people in our city are too valuable to risk on political games. Please support Advance Peace as originally intended by our community and our elected leaders.

In Community,

Pastor BT Lewis – Rising Start Baptist Church
Pastor DJ Criner – Saint Rest Baptist Church
Rabbi Rick Winer – Temple Beth Israel
Hajj Reza Nekumanesh – Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno

Rev. Simon Biasell – Woven Community PCUSA
Rev. Raygan Baker – Big Red Church
Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner – United Methodist Church
Rev. Tim Kutzmark – Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno
Rev. Renn Serna – University Presbyterian Church
Rev. April Alkema – University Presbyterian Church
Rev. Dustin Maddox – North Fresno Mennonite Brethren Church
Yammilette Rodriguez – Youth Leadership Institute
Dr. Lynn Jost, – Center for Anabaptist Studies FPU Biblical Seminary, Willow Avenue
Mennonite Church
Rev. Anna Maria Lopez – New Thought Community
Andrew Feil - Every Neighborhood Partnership
Anthony Armor – Neighborhood Industries
Pastor Curtis Smith – Faith in the Valley
Marcel Woodruff – Faith in the Valley
Rabbi Laura Winer – Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Pastor John Richardson – Prodigal Church
Deacon Matthew Ari Jendian, Ph.D – Armenian Orthodox Church
Rev. Mr. John E. Supino – St. Paul Catholic Newman Center
Rev. Dr. Norman Broadbent – First Congregational United Church of Christ (retired)
Deacon Nancy Kay – St. James Episcopal Church
Jim Grant – St. Paul Catholic Newman Center