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YOUTH FORWARD ANNOUNCES TASHA JOHNSON AS NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Accomplished public sector and nonprofit leader to build on decades of advocacy, youth leadership, and systems change at the helm of dynamic nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the wellbeing of underserved children, youth and families through youth leadership development, policy advocacy, coalition building, and community education

Friday, August 7, 2026 (Sacramento, CA) - Youth Forward is pleased to announce the selection of Tasha Johnson as the organization's next Executive Director, effective August 10, 2026. Johnson succeeds founding Executive Director Jim Keddy, who is transitioning to semi-retirement after leading the organization since its founding in 2017. Johnson brings more than two decades of leadership experience spanning local government, nonprofit organizations, youth development, and grassroots community engagement. Most recently, she served as the Director of Public Safety and Community Resources for the City of Antioch, where she launched and led the City's first Department of Public Safety and Community Resources, overseeing youth services, violence prevention, homelessness response, mental health, and community wellness initiatives. Prior to Antioch, she served as Director of Youth Programs and Development for the Greater Sacramento Urban League, leading youth workforce development, leadership, and community initiatives throughout the Sacramento region.

Youth Forward is a Sacramento-based nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the well-being of underserved children, youth, and families through youth leadership development, policy advocacy, coalition building, and community education. Since its founding, the organization has become a leading voice in California on youth-centered policy, helping secure investments in youth, advancing mental health initiatives, and building powerful coalitions that improve systems serving young people.

A Visionary Leader for Youth Forward's Next Chapter

Following a targeted search, the Board unanimously selected Johnson for her exceptional dedication to youth development; roots in and care for Sacramento's communities; track record of systems leadership; experience advancing policy and systems change; and unwavering commitment to ensuring young people are not only served by systems—but empowered to shape them. Her experience leading complex public initiatives, securing significant public and philanthropic investments, and building cross-sector partnerships closely aligns with Youth Forward's mission and strategic priorities.

Board Chair Karen Kaur said Johnson's combination of strategic leadership, collaborative spirit, and deep understanding of California's youth policy landscape made her the clear choice to lead the organization into its next phase of growth. "The Board conducted an extensive search for a leader who could honor Youth Forward's legacy while positioning the organization for even greater impact," said Kaur. "Tasha stood out because of her ability to lead across sectors, inspire diverse stakeholders, build trusted relationships with our staff and young people, and translate vision into measurable results. Her experience gives her a unique perspective on how to advance equitable public policy while strengthening communities. We are thrilled to welcome her to Youth Forward."

"When we founded Youth Forward, our vision was to create an organization that would elevate youth voice, influence public policy, and build community power on behalf of children and families," said Jim Keddy, Founder and outgoing Executive Director. "Over the past nine years, we've built a strong foundation with an extraordinary staff, committed partners, courageous young leaders, and a Board dedicated to lasting change. Tasha is exactly the kind of leader Youth Forward needs for its next chapter. She understands how to bridge community voice with systems change, has demonstrated success bringing people together around complex challenges, and shares our belief that young people are powerful agents of change. I couldn't be more excited to pass the torch."

Throughout her career, Johnson has led initiatives addressing youth opportunity, violence prevention, workforce development, homelessness, restorative justice, mental health, and community wellness. During her tenure with the City of Antioch, Johnson oversaw a multimillion-dollar portfolio of publicly funded initiatives, helped secure millions of dollars in state and local investments, expanded youth employment and leadership opportunities, and strengthened the city's coordinated response to community needs. At the Greater Sacramento Urban League, she directed a significant portfolio of youth development programming while strengthening partnerships among schools, government agencies, employers, funders, and community organizations.

Johnson said she is honored to lead Youth Forward at an important moment in the organization's evolution. "Youth Forward has built and earned an extraordinary reputation for advancing youth leadership, championing equity, and transforming public policy in ways that improve the lives of children and families," Johnson said. "I am honored to join this remarkable organization and to build upon the vision and accomplishments established by Jim Keddy, the Board, staff, youth leaders, and community partners. Young people should not be invited into decisions after they are made, but rather they should help shape the policies, investments, and systems that affect their lives from the beginning. I look forward to listening deeply, strengthening partnerships, and working alongside young people, advocates, policymakers, and funders to ensure every child and young person has the opportunity, support, and voice they deserve. Together, we will continue building communities where young people don't simply participate—they lead."

Youth Forward's Executive Director leads the organization's strategic vision, advocacy agenda, organizational operations, fundraising, and external partnerships while working closely with the Board, policymakers, community organizations, and youth leaders to advance meaningful policy and systems change.

Johnson will begin serving as Executive Director on August 10, 2026, with short-term support from Keddy to ensure a smooth transition as she assumes leadership.

The Board of Directors extends its sincere appreciation to the Executive Director Search Committee for its thoughtful leadership and commitment throughout the search process. Co-chaired by Treasurer Jay Franco and Board Member Alex Pitts and joined by Board President Karen Kaur and Board Member Amy Fitzgerald, the committee dedicated countless hours to identifying and selecting the right leader to guide Youth Forward into its next chapter. The Board also expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the Youth Forward staff for their engagement, insights, and steadfast commitment during this leadership transition. Their partnership and dedication have helped position the organization for continued success and lasting impact.

Youth Forward partnered with Walker & Associates Consulting - a Bay Area-based strategic management consulting and executive search firm promoting equitable community impact - to ensure a values-aligned approach to the search. For more information, please visit <https://walkeraac.com/>.

More About Youth Forward

Founded in 2017, Youth Forward is a Sacramento-based nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the well-being of underserved children, youth, and families through youth leadership development, policy advocacy, coalition building, and community education. Youth Forward works alongside young people and community partners to build stronger systems, influence public policy, and create lasting opportunities that help all children thrive. For more information, please visit <https://www.youth-forward.org/>.

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