*BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS*
COUNTY OF FRESNO
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**RESOLUTION NO. 25-229**

**ADOPT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING PROJECT FIRST STEP'S 20<sup>TH</sup> )**
**ANNIVERSARY IN PROVIDING FREE LEGAL REPRESENTATION     )**
**TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS IN THE COUNTY OF FRESNO)**

**WHEREAS,** Project First Step was established in 2005 in Fresno County through a collaborative partnership among the Marjaree Mason Center, the Pro Bono Services Committee of the Fresno County Bar Association, Fresno County Women Lawyers, and Central California Legal Services (CCLS). Since then, the Project First Step initiative has grown to include additional partners, including Centro La Familia Advocacy Services and the California Hmong Advocacy Network – Building Our Future, with the goal of providing free legal representation to domestic violence survivors in their efforts to obtain permanent restraining orders; and

**WHEREAS,** domestic violence is a profound and pervasive issue affecting individuals, families, and communities across California, and the legal system plays a vital role in ensuring safety, justice, and long-term protection for survivors; and

**WHEREAS,** survivors of domestic violence who have access to legal representation are significantly more likely to secure permanent restraining orders, obtain appropriate and protective custody orders for their children, and are less likely to be revictimized, while also experiencing reduced trauma and improved economic well-being; and

**WHEREAS,** Project First Step connects survivors who have already obtained temporary restraining orders with qualified pro bono attorneys for the limited legal purpose of seeking a permanent restraining order, with referrals coordinated through CCLS' Family Law team and its network of domestic violence crisis center partners; and

**WHEREAS,** pro bono attorneys participating in Project First Step initiative receive ongoing legal support and mentorship from CCLS' experienced Family Law advocates and the CCLS Pro Bono Program team, and the pro bono attorneys are protected under primary malpractice coverage provided by CCLS, whereby representation is grounded in a Limited Scope of Retainer Agreement and corresponding Notice of Limited Scope Representation, allowing attorneys to serve with clarity, confidence, and impact; and

**WHEREAS,** for the past two decades, Project First Step has brought representation and justice for victims of domestic violence and made life-saving differences in the lives of countless survivors who otherwise are unable to afford legal representation to find safety and protection under the law; and

**WHEREAS,** in 2025, Project First Step celebrates its 20th Anniversary, with a new chapter in the fight for justice, safety, and dignity with the extension of critical services to more communities in Tulare and Kings Counties by adding new coalition partners including Tulare County Bar Association, Family Services of Tulare County, Central California Family Crisis Center, Kings Community Action Organization, and Central California Legal Services.

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**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Fresno County Board of Supervisors hereby recognize Project First Step's 20 years of service in providing free legal representation to domestic violence survivors, and honors the transformative work of their dedicated pro bono attorneys who give their time, talents, and hearts in service of justice to ensure that every survivor of domestic violence has the legal support they need to live free from fear.

**THE FOREGOING,** was passed and adopted by the following vote of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Fresno this 8th day of July 2025, to-wit:

AYES:        Supervisors Bredefeld, Chavez, Magsig, Mendes, Pacheco
NOES:        None
ABSENT:      None
ABSTAINED: None

Ernest Buddy Mendes, Chairman of the Board of
Supervisors of the County of Fresno

ATTEST:
BERNICE E. SEIDEL
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Fresno, State of California

By
Deputy

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