



## MEDIA RELEASE

Media Contact:

Mary Lynne Vellinga, [mlvellinga@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:mlvellinga@cityofsacramento.org), 916-599-3724

Jennifer Singer, [jsinger@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:jsinger@cityofsacramento.org), 916-995-4385

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### City of Sacramento opens Financial Empowerment Center, offering free professional one-on-one financial counseling and coaching for residents

**Sacramento, Calif. (May 27, 2020)** – The City of Sacramento, in partnership with the national nonprofit organization [Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund](#) (CFE Fund), announced today the opening of Sacramento's [Financial Empowerment Center](#) (FEC), offering professional, one-on-one financial counseling and coaching as a free public service to local residents.

Through the local FEC, three full-time, professionally trained counselors will help individuals and families with low and moderate incomes manage their finances, pay down debt, increase savings, establish and build credit and access safe and affordable mainstream banking products.

"We began building the Financial Empowerment Center before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a way to help local residents make and achieve plans for long-term financial health," said **Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg**. "Now, as we launch the initiative in this new world, our FEC counselors are also prepared to help people access immediate benefits and resources needed in this crisis, while still keeping an eye on future goals."

The City has contracted with the [Sacramento office of International Rescue Committee](#) (IRC) to manage the FEC program, client referrals and counselors. IRC has deep local and international experience helping households increase their financial security. Through IRC, the FEC counselors are taking targeted client referrals from ten local partners: Alchemist CDC, Building Skills Partnership, Hacker Lab, La Familia Counseling Center, Mutual Assistance Network, Next Move, SEIU Local 1000, United Way California Capital Region, Wind Youth Services (in partnership with Juma Ventures) and Youth & Family Collective.

Local residents can request the service (available in English and Spanish) by calling 916-808-4927 or emailing [FEC@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:FEC@cityofsacramento.org). All FEC appointments will be by phone or video chat during the coronavirus pandemic. When office workplaces resume operations, the counseling will take place at IRC and the FEC partner's offices.

Founding financial support for the Sacramento FEC comes from a \$150,000-year one contribution from [Citi Community Development](#). This leveraged a \$150,000 match from the CFE Fund. The City of Sacramento has committed \$350,000 to the FEC for its first two years.

"The Financial Empowerment Center will allow Mutual Assistance Network the opportunity to connect the individuals and families that we work with to a certified financial counselor and coach," said **Danielle Lawrence**, executive director of Mutual Assistance Network, one of the FEC partners and counseling locations. "This is a valuable inclusive economic development strategy to address systemic barriers to economic stability and growth for neighborhood residents."



First piloted in New York City under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2008, FECs across the country have worked with almost 109,000 clients, helping them reduce individual debt by over \$150 million, and increasing their families' savings by close to \$26 million. In addition, a recent CFE Fund evaluation showed that this program works even for residents with very low incomes and other complex financial challenges. Sacramento has been one of dozens of local governments working to launch a local FEC initiative, and today becomes the 19<sup>th</sup> fully operating FEC in the country.

“Local leaders know first-hand the connection between family financial stability and community financial stability,” said **Jonathan Mintz, President and CEO of the CFE Fund**. “Mayor Steinberg and the City of Sacramento are part of a growing national movement to bring free, high-quality financial counseling as a public service to residents; we are proud to partner with them on this critical work.”

*Please note that while the Financial Empowerment Center does not directly provide cash assistance, FEC counselors can help eligible clients access such local, state and national resources as they are available.*

###