

Supes endorse San Jose ballot initiative that would give part-time workers more hours



SAN JOSE (BCN) — The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Tuesday endorsed a San Jose ballot measure designed to help part-time workers in the city.

Three of five board members voted Tuesday in support of the Opportunity to Work initiative that will be presented to San Jose voters on the November ballot. The proposal would require employers to offer newly available hours to current and qualified part-time workers before hiring any new employees.

The supervisors normally doesn't weigh in on local measures, but board president Dave Cortese said he was hopeful the initiative would be successful. If passed, the measure would have fiscal and humanitarian effects for the county, Cortese said.

"Much of our county is filled with people trying to grasp with the cost of living here," Cortese said.

Many workers in the county don't have adequate health care and paid sick leave because of their employment status, he said.

Cortese, who has a background in running businesses, said he found it hard for employers to argue it's more expensive or difficult to move a part-time employee to full-time status as opposed to bringing in a new hire.

Silicon Valley Rising, a coalition of community groups, gathered more than 35,000 signatures that it delivered to city officials in San Jose earlier this year to qualify for the general election.

If passed, the measure would impact 64,000 part-time employees, a majority of whom are women and people of color, according to the coalition.

In June, the San Jose City Council had the option to adopt the initiative as an ordinance and in a 7-4 vote sent it to the voters.

During Tuesday's board meeting, Sunnyvale City Councilman Jim Davis called on the supervisors to support the initiative as many people in the county currently work multiple jobs to bring enough money for their households.

If passed, the measure would allow families to have an opportunity to receive fair wages and become successful, Davis said.

Many community members also spoke to the various hardships county residents face in keeping up with rising rates for rent, food, transportation and other necessities.

The county is directly impacted by the initiative as it is increasingly seeing a wider gap between the rich and the poor, Supervisor Cindy Chavez said.

"I do think that we have an obligation as a group of community leaders to say when we think something is not right and not working," Supervisor Cindy Chavez said.

Before casting a no vote, Supervisor Mike Wasserman said he was concerned the measure won't provide the "desired outcomes."

Supervisor Joe Simitian, who didn't say whether he supported or opposed the initiative, abstained from voting because he didn't believe it was appropriate for the board to weigh in on local measures except in special cases.

Simitian also questioned whether the public would benefit from knowing the board's position on certain measures heading into the polls.

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