

UNITEHERE! Local 2850

East and North Bay's Union for hotel, foodservice, and gaming workers

1440 Broadway Suite 208, Oakland, CA 94612 | P: 510-893-3181 | F: 510-893-5362

Vice President Wilma Chan
1221 Oak St # 536
Oakland, CA 94612

October 3, 2016

Dear Vice President Chan,

I am writing you today to express UNITE HERE's deep concerns about the controversial Urban Shield training and weapons expo held in Alameda County. We have learned that funding proposals to the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative will be due on October 14. We feel strongly that the Board of Supervisors should *exclude* Urban Shield from any funding proposals for Fiscal Year 2017. Alameda County has an opportunity to seek funding for emergency response resources that prioritize health and wellbeing and not militarized policing. I hope the Board takes this opportunity to defund Urban Shield now.

UNITE HERE represents 2,000 union workers in hotels, airport concessions, gaming, and food service all across the country. From Pleasanton to Oakland, Petaluma to Berkeley, we're a fighting union dedicated to raising standards in our industries and demand respect on the job. While UNITE HERE is extremely supportive of Alameda County developing, supporting, and increasing its capacity to respond to emergencies, we are not supportive of divisive and dangerous programs such as Urban Shield. We know that Urban Shield is billed as an emergency preparedness activity. However the war games perpetuate racist and xenophobic stereotypes, increase the use of militarized weaponry and tactics in everyday law enforcement, and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. The climate of increased police killings, militarized SWAT raids and sweeps, and surveillance technologies including drones has frayed already tattered community/police relations, destabilized neighborhoods, and broken up families across the Bay Area.

As a union whose members come overwhelmingly from people of color and immigrant communities, it saddens and frustrates us to attend so many vigils and rallies for victims of police violence. We are tired of hearing our members' stories of violent interactions with the police at work or at home, and we are concerned about the caution and fear our neighbors and coworkers have to carry in interacting with law enforcement. We believe that militarized programs like Urban Shield do not help our members feel safer, but instead exacerbate fear and a sense of instability.

Urban Shield is failing our communities when it comes to preparing ourselves for the emergencies to which we are particularly vulnerable. ***The time has come for the Bay Area to shift its orientation toward preparing for emergencies.*** We insist that the health and wellbeing impacts of such preparation lead our efforts rather than go left unaddressed. UASI funding could be mobilized to support that shift. We would like to see emergency response resources that are wasted on Urban Shield to be diverted to training and programs focused on Medical and Public Health, Emergency Planning and Community Preparedness, and Recovery. We understand that all first responders (including fire and EMT professionals) need training for emergencies, however we would like to see that training shift away from a militarized approach, toward a more inclusive and sustainable one.

Alameda County decision makers play an important role in determining the nature, form, and implementation of the county's emergency preparedness. Shifting disaster preparedness priorities toward community strength and resilience and away from war games and militarization is an important way to demonstrate a commitment to shoring up preparedness without making the county's communities vulnerable. We ask that the Board of Supervisors to use its power to restrict or approve the resources for which the Sheriff's Department applies and receives, and reject or pull any proposal for

UASI funds that include Urban Shield.

Thank you for your attention and action on this important matter. As always, we would be enthusiastic about meeting with you and discussing these issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wei-Ling Huber', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Wei-Ling Huber

President of UNITE HERE! Local 2850