

CITY OF FRESNO

Office of Councilmember Annalisa Perea

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 custody orders for their children, and are less likely to be revictimized. Access to legal representation also helps with reducing the chances of experiencing trauma and improves the chances of improved economic well-being; and

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). Over time, the 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, 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 receive ongoing legal support and mentorship from CCLS' experienced Family Law advocates and the CCLS Pro Bono Program team; and

WHEREAS, for the past two decades, Project First Step has made a life-saving difference in the lives of countless survivors, ensuring that justice is not reserved for those who can afford it, but extended to all who seek safety and protection under the law; and

WHEREAS, in this, the year of Project First Step's 20th Anniversary, the program expands to Tulare and Kings Counties, where a coalition of new partners including the Tulare County Bar Association, Family Services of Tulare County, Central California Family Crisis Center, Kings Community Action Organization, and Central California Legal Services will bring these critical services to even more communities in need; and

WHEREAS, the launch of Project First Step in Tulare and Kings Counties marks a new chapter in the fight for justice, safety, and dignity for survivors throughout Central California.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we, Mayor Jerry P. Dyer, Councilmember Annalisa Perea, and the Fresno City Councilmembers recognize and honor the transformative work of Project First Step, its partners, and the dedicated pro bono attorneys who give their time, talents, and hearts in service of justice. We celebrate the 20th Anniversary of its founding, and we commend the launch of its new programs in Tulare and Kings Counties. Let this proclamation stand as a call to action to advance access to justice and ensure that every survivor of domestic violence receives the legal support they need to live free from fear.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, Mayor Jerry P. Dyer, Councilmember Annalisa Perea, and the Fresno City Councilmembers, do hereby proclaim the Month of July 2025 to be:

“Project First Step”

in the City of Fresno.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and affixed the Great Seal of the City of Fresno, California, on this the 17th day of July 2025.

JERRY P. DYER, Honorable Mayor

ANNALISA PEREA, Councilmember District 1

MIKE KARBASSI, Council President District 2

MIGUEL ARIAS, Council Vice President District 3

TYLER MAXWELL, Councilmember District 4

BRANDON VANG, Councilmember District 5

NICK RICHARDSON, Councilmember District 6

NELSON ESPARZA, Councilmember District 7