

Paul Bocanegra: Co-Founder, Unlocked Futures

Paul Bocanegra was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole at the age of 17 for a crime he did not commit. He served 25½ years in prison before being granted parole under California Senate Bill 9, which provided individuals sentenced as youth to life without parole the opportunity to petition the court for a second sentencing hearing. Paul returned to the community in September 2017 and successfully completed parole in 2021, gaining the opportunity to build a new life for the first time as an adult.

Today, Paul is a passionate advocate for criminal justice reform, working to ensure that no young person is condemned without a meaningful opportunity for rehabilitation and restoration. He is a Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor, public speaker, criminal justice consultant, mentor to individuals transitioning back into the community, and serves as a Commissioner on the San Mateo County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Commission.

Paul has testified before the California State Legislature, helped defeat legislation that threatened important criminal justice reforms, contributed to the development of new legislation, and collaborated with numerous agencies and organizations throughout San Mateo County to improve outcomes for system-impacted youth.

Paul is the co-founder of **Unlocked Futures**, an organization dedicated to supporting system-impacted youth and transitional-aged young adults through restorative, community-based services. Rather than relying on punitive models, Unlocked Futures focuses on meeting young people where they are and providing the individualized resources and support they need to successfully transition back into their communities. The organization's work is rooted in Paul's lived experience navigating the school-to-prison pipeline.

Throughout his life and career, Paul has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving the juvenile justice system in San Mateo County and creating opportunities for young people to heal, grow, and thrive.

Beth von Emster: Co-Founder, In Our Care

Beth von Emster is the co-founder of In Our Care San Mateo County, a community group that advocates for the rights and dignity of youth involved in the criminal legal system. Outside of her volunteer work with In Our Care, Beth is a retired corporate attorney who co-chairs the ACLU San Mateo County Chapter where she works on voting rights, housing advocacy, and criminal justice. She serves on the boards of the ACLU of Northern CA and the UC Berkeley Foundation.

Becca Kieler: Co-Founder, In Our Care:

Becca Kieler is the Co-Founder of In Our Care San Mateo County (IOC SMC) and a lifelong advocate for equity and justice for all, with a special focus on our youth. She holds a core belief that if we honestly solved the issues of poverty and racism our crime rate would drop to almost 0. It is in our community's best interest to give these youth everything they need to succeed, and they are moldable enough to do so if given the chance. IOC SMC was created to honor the humanity of our youth in our legal system and to make systemic changes within that system to treat them with basic human dignity and to support them.

Becca has a professional background in social work with Santa Clara County and is a business owner as a career transition specialist via Kieler Career Consulting. She is also deeply involved in Unlocked Futures (former Board Chair) and Fixin' San Mateo County.