

## California EDGE Coalition's 2022 Opportunity Youth Policy Agenda

EDGE is proud to release its first policy agenda that centers opportunity youth (OY) in workforce development, education, and training advocacy efforts. EDGE remains committed to addressing workforce shortages while creating pathways to good jobs. Historically, EDGE has focused its efforts on adults and is expanding efforts to include OY.

OY are individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 that are not in school or working, including youth and young adults involved with the foster care, juvenile justice, and homelessness systems of care. They face unique employment, education, and training barriers that often do not align with efforts that center adults. Opportunity youth facing socio-economic and systemic barriers are oftentimes disconnected from education and workforce training opportunities, preventing young people of color especially from accessing our state's prosperity. Prioritizing opportunity youth will not only expand education and workforce opportunities for them but also expand the pool of talent that employers can access to meet their workforce needs. EDGE's 2022 Opportunity Youth Policy Agenda seeks to develop and expand policies and investments that will prepare and support OY while also supporting the workforce needs of businesses.

- **Protect and increase funding for education and workforce training programs that center OY and create pathways to good jobs.** Funding opportunities should also include leveraging dollars from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, such as the recently approved out-of-school youth federal waiver which allows local workforce boards more flexibility to support OY strategies.
- **Expand innovative “earn and learn” opportunities,** including apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities.
- **Advance policies and investments that remove barriers to OY participating in High Road Training Partnerships (H RTP),** including opportunities to uplift OY within the Community Economic Resilience Fund planning process - intended to align regional workforce needs to H RTP.
- **Advance the implementation of adult dual enrollment,** which will allow OY to earn college credit while earning their high school equivalency.
- **Protect and expand social safety net investments for OY that support basic needs** such as food, housing, internet access, transportation, childcare, and healthcare - enabling them to complete their education/training goals, and thrive in today's labor market.
- **Engage in the development and implementation of California's longitudinal data system** to ensure the system considers the unique challenges and needs of OY.
- **Remove barriers OY face when accessing financial aid for education and training programs.**