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**UNITED WAY OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY
AWARDED FELLOWSHIP TO EXPAND BANKING ACCESS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

April 20, 2026 –Bank On San Diego has received a new grant from national nonprofit the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund), with support from the Wells Fargo Foundation, to supercharge banking access work in San Diego County. United Way of San Diego County (UWSD) leads Bank on San Diego, a partnership between local government agencies, financial institutions, and community organizations that work together to help improve the financial stability of low- and moderate-income individuals and families. United Way of San Diego County’s vision is to bring accessible banking resources to every corner of our community. As a trusted community leader, UWSD works collaboratively with diverse communities across San Diego County, identifying areas of greatest need and working tirelessly to make a meaningful impact.

The grant will support efforts to connect San Diego residents to safe, affordable banking options and integrate banking access into existing community programs and payment streams. Nina Ghatan, Director of Collaborative Impact at United Way of San Diego County, will serve as Bank On’s Fellow for a two-year term to advance banking access at scale.

9.9% of San Diego residents are underbanked, with another 2.8% being unbanked. Over their lifetime, this will cost residents an average of \$40,000. Bank On San Diego plays a vital role in reducing the disparities caused by being underbanked and fostering greater economic equity and opportunity for all members of our community. Bank On accounts serve as an entry point for new customers to build relationships with financial institutions. Over time, these relationships provide people with access to products that help them achieve goals such as buying a home, starting a small business, and buying a car.

Launched in 2017 with generous support from the Wells Fargo Foundation, the Bank On Fellows initiative is the first national initiative focused on building experienced banking access leaders across the country, equipping them with the training, tools, and resources to make significant advancements in local banking access efforts while also generating best practices for other coalitions. Dedicated local leadership is critical to moving beyond general education and literacy efforts to identify systemic integration points – from unemployment insurance to tax refunds to other program and payment streams – to connect unbanked people to safe, affordable accounts at scale. Bank On San Diego is one of five coalitions across the country whose work will be supported by this fifth cohort of the Bank On Fellows initiative. The goal of the national Bank On movement is to ensure that everyone has access to safe and affordable financial products and services.

This latest cohort will support five host organizations; each already leads an active Bank On coalition with staff who have completed Bank On foundational training. As such, incoming fellows will assume



leadership roles in coalitions that are already actively advancing banking access work. This cohort is positioned to begin immediately building meaningful banking-access partnerships under the new Fellows' leadership.

Bank On San Diego has helped financial institutions achieve Bank On certification, expanding people's access to safe, affordable products. In addition, the coalition is planning events to act as a catalyst in increasing access to Bank On-certified accounts throughout our community. On June 6th, Bank On San Diego will host a multi-generational financial education and account-opening event at MAAC in Chula Vista to encourage more families to teach their children about financial literacy at a young age.

"For more than 100 years, we have worked to close gaps in our community for families," said **Rachael Orose, President and CEO at United Way of San Diego County**. "One of the most urgent issues is the safe banking gap, which impacts over 154,000 people across our region. At a time when everyday costs are rising, and families are feeling the strain, we're rallying a coalition of banks, credit unions, and community partners to ensure our neighbors can access safe, high-quality financial products that help them keep more of their hard-earned money. Families need solutions now, and by bringing together leading organizations, we are taking action to expand access, remove barriers, and create real pathways to financial security for those furthest from resources."

The CFE Fund leads the [national Bank On movement](#), supporting local coalitions working to connect individuals and families to the financial mainstream through partnerships between local governments, financial institutions, and community organizations. The [Bank On National Account Standards](#) define characteristics of a safe, affordable, and fully functional consumer account; accounts certified as meeting Bank On Standards are available at over 500 banks and credit unions across the country in over 46,000 branches, comprising more than two-thirds of the U.S. deposit market share.

"Banking access is foundational to financial stability," said **Jonathan Mintz, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund**. "A safe, affordable, mainstream account is critical to helping people manage their money and improve their financial health. Bank On coalitions across the country connect people to safe accounts at scale, and a dedicated coalition leader will only expand and build upon this work. We are proud to partner with the Wells Fargo Foundation to support Bank On San Diego and their new full-time Fellow Nina Ghatan in helping San Diego County residents connect to safe financial products."

"What most excites me about the Bank On Fellowship is that we're systematically building bank and credit union access into people's lives in ways that are accessible and easy to participate in, if they choose to," said **Nina Ghatan, Director of Community Impact at United Way of San Diego County and Bank On Fellow**. "This summer, we will pilot account openings and financial education for high school students participating in UWSD's Dream with STEAM summer program. I'm eager to learn from this experience and provide technical assistance and support to other nonprofit and government programs interested in doing this type of work to scale."

"Expanding banking access requires strong local leadership," said **Bonnie Wallace, Head of Financial Opportunity Philanthropy at Wells Fargo**. "The proven Bank On Fellows model places full-time leaders in established and new coalitions to align local efforts and expand access to safe, affordable banking."



In the decade plus since its national launch, the Bank On movement has grown significantly; there are more than 14 million Bank On certified accounts currently open, with over 4.8 million newly opened just last year. The latest report from the St. Louis Federal Reserve and the CFE Fund's [Bank On National Data Hub](#) revealed that Bank On continues to bring previously unbanked populations into the financial mainstream; in 2024, 84% of customers who opened Bank On certified accounts were new to the financial institution. Thanks to the innovative partnerships built across financial institutions, community organizations, federal regulators, and government agencies, the national unbanked rate—now just 4.2% of U.S. households—has dropped by nearly half since its peak. This latest cohort of Fellows will continue this crucial work, helping to bring the hardest-to-reach populations into the financial mainstream.

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About United Way of San Diego County

For over 100 years, United Way of San Diego County has remained devoted to its mission of sparking breakthrough community action that elevates every child, individual, and family toward a brighter future. As a trusted community leader, UWSD works collaboratively with diverse communities across San Diego County, identifying areas of greatest need and working tirelessly to make a meaningful impact. Today, in partnership with schools, businesses, policymakers, nonprofits, and government agencies, United Way of San Diego County harnesses collective strengths to address longstanding disparities, so all San Diegans have the resources and support needed to achieve educational success and financial stability.

The nonprofit organization's current initiatives focus on bridging gaps in the community, from early childhood literacy support to high school career readiness programs, as well as providing economic resources for individuals and families in need. United Way of San Diego County believes that united with community partners, we can forge pathways to opportunity, ensuring that all San Diegans can thrive at every stage of life. Learn more and get involved by visiting uwsd.org and following @unitedwaysd on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and LinkedIn.