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The Latino Legal Voice for Civil Rights in America.

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April 14, 2020

Ann Sullivan, President of the Board of Trustees
Huntington Beach City School District
8750 Dorsett Drive
Huntington Beach, CA 92646
boardsullivan@hbcsd.us; board@hbcsd.us

Sent via email

RE: School Consolidation Task Force and Perry Elementary

Dear President Ann Sullivan:

We write with various concerns about the formation of the Huntington Beach City School District School Consolidation Task Force (“Task Force”) and the recommendation by the Task Force to close Perry Elementary School.

Discussions with parents of district students and Huntington Beach community leaders have informed us that the selection process for the Task Force was conducted entirely online, and that no application or solicitation materials for the Task Force were provided in Spanish. The selection process for the Task Force also required the submission of a résumé, a document that is unnecessary for someone to perform the duties required to serve on the Task Force. This requirement deters stay-at-home parents and those who work in jobs that do not require résumés from applying to the Task Force and can have the discriminatory effect of excluding low-income and monolingual-Spanish-speaking parents and community members. As you already know, Perry Elementary, the school designated for closure by the Task Force, has the highest concentration of Latino, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English-learning students in the District.¹

The Board formed the Task Force under California Education Code section 17387.² Education Code section 17389 mandates that the Task Force “shall be representative of” several characteristics of the district, including “the ethnic, age group, and socioeconomic composition of the district.” About 20 percent of the district’s students in 2018-19 were classified by the state as “socioeconomically disadvantaged.” About 37 percent of the District’s

¹ All data from the California Department of Education’s Data Quest portal, available at: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

² Resolution S-24-19/20, available at: <https://4.files.edl.io/77c5/02/07/20/212227-59c1a39e-ae9d-4e40-924f-1875d7212b98.pdf>.

students in 2018-19 were categorized as “Hispanic or Latino.”³ The process of forming a committee of 11 members that is representative of the ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged status of significant portions of the district’s student population should include outreach to the Latino community and an application accessible to those without an internet connection or without a résumé. Parents and community members have also informed us that none of the members of the Task Force lived within or near the Perry Elementary school boundaries. The exclusion of Perry stakeholders from the school closure process is, in the least, unfair.

We urge the Board to make greater efforts to include the community members and parents who would be most affected by the closure of a community school. The closure of Perry would require the students who currently live within the school’s boundaries to travel to schools located at least a mile and half away from Perry. The district currently charges for bus passes, even for low-income students. Closing Perry would force many students and their families to purchase these passes just to attend their assigned new school. To ensure a more inclusive process, the District should re-select the Task Force to be composed of a membership more representative of the community; the new Task Force should then revisit the designation of Perry for closure.

We request that you respond in writing as soon as practicable with a description of what steps, if any, the District plans on taking to ensure that Perry parents and stakeholders reflective of the district population are included in the consolidation decision process.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Deylin Thrift-Viveros
Staff Attorney
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cc: Bridget Kaub, Vice-President HBCSD Board of Trustees, boardkaub@hbcasd.us
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³ California Department of Education’s Data Quest portal, available at: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.