



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE**

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Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Makes its Case that City of Malibu's Petition for Unification Will Create Irreparable Damage to Children in Santa Monica and Malibu and Invites the City to Return to the Negotiating Table

Petition will lead both communities off a "fiscal cliff"

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and community argued before the Los Angeles County Committee on Unification, April 17, 2021, that the city of Malibu's petition for unification would create irreparable harm to both Santa Monica and Malibu; specifically, in the areas of diversity, equity, educational programs and finances.

In their presentation, the City of Malibu did not provide current data or statistics to justify the financial methodology of their proposal nor did they explain the fact that recent studies have demonstrated that, given future population projections, the City of Malibu would not have enough students to sustain a stand-alone district. Despite this projected student deficit, the proposed Malibu School District would take a disproportionate share of funding resources – 33% of shared property taxes for 12.2% of students. The City of Malibu also failed to address how a new Malibu Unified School District would address its lack of diversity.

"It was clear from the diverse and broad base of support from speakers opposing the petition that the lack of equity and fairness in the City petition was at the forefront of their minds," remarked Board President Jon Kean. "The City also failed to acknowledge that SMMUSD presented a working methodology for an equitable unification that the City "begrudgingly" accepted before leaving the table. We would eagerly welcome them back for a conversation that is shorter on grievances and longer on facts and solutions."

Further strengthening the SMMUSD position were letters of support submitted by the NAACP Santa Monica Venice Branch, ACLU Foundation of Southern California, and other equity groups, establishing the case that a newly created Malibu School District would be severely problematic, as it would set a precedent for creating school districts where diversity would be non-existent.

"One of the elements that has always made our district so strong is the fact that we are comprised of a diverse mix of students from every socio-economic and racial demographic," Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent, SMMUSD said. "As someone who has devoted his entire career to educating children, it would be extremely heart breaking to see a district formed that, by virtue of its makeup, would ill prepare students to navigate the diversity of the world."

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