

DRAFT

DATE

Christina Pritchett, Board President
Jorge Aguilar, Superintendent
Sacramento City Unified School District
5735 47th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95824

Re: Designation of the Community Advisory Committee as the Lead Stakeholder
Organization for Students with Disabilities

Dear President Pritchett and Superintendent Aguilar,

The District's Community Advisory Committee for special education (CAC) is a statutorily required body that exists as a prerequisite component of the District's local plan for its single-district Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). As required by Education Code section 56192, we are a group "composed of parents of individuals with exceptional needs enrolled in public or private schools, parents of other pupils enrolled in school, pupils and adults with disabilities, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other school personnel, representatives of other public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with exceptional needs." Consistent with Education Code section 56914, we advise you on the local plan, educate parents about the plan and special education services generally, and support students with disabilities. We also serve as a sounding board for parents concerned about their own children (with or without disabilities) and a group that advocates on behalf of our members to the Board. We are volunteers who work to make the District better for all of its students.

Unfortunately, much of our work does not result in meaningful change to the District's Special Education Department or its SELPA. We are rarely consulted beyond what is minimally required by the Education Code and our feedback is not included in key decisions made by or affecting the District's Special Education Department. We have a wealth of experience about and knowledge of the needs of students with disabilities and students generally, but our means to convey that to you and to District staff is substantially curtailed when we are not treated as key stakeholders.

Therefore, we are requesting that you designate the CAC as the lead stakeholder organization for engagement in the development and implementation of services for students with disabilities.

This designation would not just allow the CAC to perform its responsibilities consistent with the true intention of the law, but would benefit the District by allowing it to improve its Special Education Department – helping all of its students.

The requested change

We request the Board pass a resolution officially designating the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education (CAC) as the lead stakeholder organization for engagement in the development and implementation of services for students with disabilities, and that such designation be specified in the SELPA governance documents. The resolution would commit to transparency with the CAC in all decision making impacting students with disabilities, and further to ensure that all conversations with or commitments made to any other stakeholder group include prior consultation and coordination with the CAC.

How SCUSD benefits

The resolution would be a commitment by the Board to approach Special Education in a different and more effective way, which would result in improved services to students and contribute to reducing the cost related to Special Education, including settlements.

What would be different under the proposed resolution

Simply put, the CAC would be at the table at any and all negotiations over the development and implementation of any plans or updates to special education services in the District. The Education Code requires it, and also the CAC has the lived experience and relevant knowledge to effectively assist and collaborate with the District in prioritizing the needs of students with disabilities.

Legal basis more approving the request

The CAC is a statutorily established advisory committee to the SELPA, and its duties and responsibilities are enumerated the California Education Code. Bylaws provide the governance and membership requirements for the CAC. State law dictates that the CAC is subject to the Brown Act, making it the only stakeholder group in the District besides the Board that conducts all of its business publicly and transparently.

Because Sacramento City Unified City District is a single-district SELPA, the Board of Trustees is also responsible to ensure the SELPA's responsibilities to students with disabilities. The Board approves and oversees the implementation of the Annual Budget Plan and Annual Service Plan for the SELPA. Consistent with guidance from the California Department of Education, the District must ensure that the CAC has "adequate and effective" participation in the development of the Local Plan and annual updates, and also must provide the CAC at least 30 days to review and provide feedback on the plan. Additionally, the description of the governance of the SELPA must receive the CAC's certification.

CAC is capable of benefitting the District if the request is approved

The CAC is highly effective due to its long history of especially knowledgeable members and officers in the field of special education and public administration. Current and former officers

have been members and leaders of statewide governmental and nongovernmental organizations (including at the California Department of Education), task forces, and committees to special education and disability rights. CAC members have been actively engaged in other District advisory and work groups, including the Local Control Accountability Plan Parent Advisory Committee, the Graduation Task Force, the African American Achievement Task Force, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports work group, and various school site councils.

The CAC is also highly effective due to its deep representation of all students with disabilities in the District. Its members and students: are of all socio-economic sectors; live across the District and in multi-generational families; are Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, white, multiracial, bilingual, LGBTQ, straight, former foster youth; and have developmental, physical, and learning disabilities. The students of the current officers are in general education, special day classes, home hospital, and nonpublic schools.

The CAC has consistently articulated and advocated for systemic change in SCUSD. Despite the right to a least restrictive environment secured by Sacramento's own Rachel Holland over twenty years ago, past administrations have continued to perpetuate a system and culture of exclusion and segregation of students with disabilities. Beginning in 2014, the CAC spotlighted the discriminatory and illegal provisions in Appendix D of the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union. In 2016, the CAC called for an independent audit of the disproportionality and other failures of the special education programs in SCUSD, which resulted in the 2017 Council of Great City Schools report (2017 report) documenting these failures and providing a comprehensive blueprint to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. A subsequent Comprehensive Review by the California Department of Education found even more legal and programmatic deficiencies in the District's special education services. The CAC has been involved all along the way, providing advice to the District that has unfortunately often been disregarded or maybe not even heard.

The requested Board resolution would strengthen CAC's ability to effectively advise the Board based on the most current information, data available and different perspectives. The resolution would be a small but important step in improving the District's approach to Special Education.

Respectfully,

The CAC 2020/2021 Executive Committee: Chair - Benita Shaw-Ayala
Vice-Chair - Kristen Jordan
Secretary - Taylor Kayatta
Treasurer - Rose McAuliffe
Parliamentarian - Kenya Martinez
Member-at-Large - Lisa Arnold-Fernandez
Member-at-Large - Dennis Mah

The CAC General Membership, by (unanimous) vote taken on DATE at a CAC (executive/general/special) meeting.

The following CAC members who requested that their names be specifically listed:

NAMES

DRAFT