

Comments by David Fisher, President of the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA), to the Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) Board of Education, Public Comment (Report of SCTA), Agenda Item 9.1

February 4, 2021

Good evening. I'm David Fisher, president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association.

I'd like to start out my comments tonight with several facts about the Sacramento City Unified School District Budget.

Fact # 1: Since the 2012-2013 school year, the District has run a surplus every year except one: 2017-18. And you may recall, that in that year, the District was told by the Sacramento County Office of Education it needed to make budget cuts to offset the costs of our contract settlement and instead Superintendent Aguilar went on a spending spree including \$6 million to cash out the vacation of the District's top administrators.

Fact #2: In March 2019, the Sacramento City Unified School Board passed resolution No. 3060 "On Fiscal Solvency Plan to Save Our Schools" which included the following:

"District Superintendent, Jorge Aguilar, has agreed to forgo any salary increase allowed under his Employment Agreement until the District receives either a qualified or positive certification as defined in Education Code section 42131, subdivision (a)(1)."

The District still has not had a budget that has received "either a qualified or positive certification as defined in Education Code section 42131, subdivision (a) (1)" and yet Superintendent Aguilar has taken a \$34,126 increase in his total compensation.

Fact #3: The District has the largest reserve fund in its history: \$93 million. That's 8 times higher than the 2% reserve required by the state.

Fact #4: Since the District's budget was rejected for the first time in August 2018, the first time an SCUSD budget was rejected in its entire history, the SCUSD reserve has INCREASED by more than \$24 million.

Fact #5: At its current \$89 million (down from the original budget of \$101.3 million) the SCUSD budget currently includes \$70 million in books and supplies, more than it traditionally spends in this category. Chief Business Officer Rose Ramos has acknowledged that these extra tens of millions of dollars are parked in books and supplies until the District figures out how to spend the dollars.

Fact #6: The District, in a transaction approved by the previous school board (which includes four of you) on the consent agenda and by the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), went forward with the \$6 million purchase of unproven portable air filtration units, even after SCTA recommended that the District seek advice from scientific experts. Since then, the units had to be taken out of classrooms when SCTA and SEIU raised health and safety concerns and demanded their removal.

Fact #7: The District is receiving \$124 million in new revenue from the federal government as a result of two COVID relief packages. This does not include the millions more expected to come from the new Biden administration.

Fact #8: Governor Newsom's California State Budget, which calls for the highest K-12 spending in California history, will result in \$100 million or more in new revenue for SCUSD.

Fact #9: Even with Chief Business Officer Rose Ramos' overly conservative calculations, based on the Governor's January budget, the District should present a **POSITIVELY CERTIFIED** Second Interim Budget for board approval in March.

Fact #10: For the District to cut any services to students or to demand \$20 million in shifting health care costs onto staff resulting in cuts to take-home pay by as much as 34.6%, or over \$17,000 per year, is unconscionable.

If SCUSD truly has a financial crisis, you have a huge reserve fund you can use to respond.

If it is not a crisis, why are you demanding huge cuts to teachers' take home pay when there's already thousands of students without credentialed teachers in the classroom?