

OAKLAND NOT FOR SALE

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October 16, 2019

To: Chairperson Councilmember Nikki Bas, President Pro Tempore Dan Kalb, Councilmember Loren Taylor, Councilmember Sheng Thao, President Aimee Eng, Director Jumoke Hinton Hodge, Director Jody London, Director Rosanne Torres

CC: Mayor Libby Schaaf, Superintendent of Oakland Unified School District Dr. Kyla Johnson Trammel

From: Oakland Is Not For Sale Coalition

Dear Joint Education Committee Members,

On February 5, 2019, Oakland City Council members unanimously approved Resolution 87522 in support of Oakland Education Association (OEA) teacher demands during their teacher strike to settle a fair contract with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). A critical component of this statement included the council's request that OUSD do everything possible to avoid closing Oakland public schools.

However, the City Council's concerns about school closures in Oakland have been ignored by the people who are making decisions about the future of OUSD's public schools. Those same decision-makers also ignore the concerns raised by thousands of Oakland families, teachers, and school staff.

Attempting to justify the steady march of school closures and consolidations, the District points to fiscal insolvency and mismanagement - all while our school budgets have been under the oversight of local, county, and state officials. But OUSD ended last year with a **\$21 million surplus**, and the State is now moving toward providing millions in additional funding to public schools. The District's own data show that school closures **do not** save money. The District's own accounting shows that closures cost the District students and qualified employees. School closures result in lost students, teachers, and lost revenues, while traumatizing Oakland's students and families.

On September 11, 2019, OUSD board members voted to continue to close and consolidate schools, moving forward with their "*Blueprint for Quality Schools*" process, through School Board Policy 6006. This process is also called "*The Citywide Plan*" and is an effort to downsize Oakland public schools. A plan in name only, the District provides stakeholders with nothing more than a list of schools tagged for closure. The District's "plan" arises from the lobbying efforts of wealthy privatizers who seek to expand charter school growth in Oakland at the expense of traditional public schools, while public school decision makers stand by.

As with past Oakland public school closures, the District refuses to meaningfully engage with school site communities or the public about these decisions. The District has been unable, or unwilling, to provide resources, institutional support, organization, or other protective measures

NO SCHOOL CLOSURES

to stop — or minimize — the harm caused by school closures. The research is clear: School closures hurt children, especially our most underserved students.

The District repeatedly targets and negatively impacts schools serving under-resourced students. On January 28, 2019, the OUSD Board voted to close Roots International Academy without any community or school engagement. Many students displaced by the Roots closure were assigned to a school targeted for closure by the School Board's vote on September 11, 2019. For those students, the District has moved to close their school twice, in less than one year.

The Oakland Is Not for Sale Coalition, a coalition of parents, teachers, and community groups working to save public education in Oakland, also opposes Alameda County's proposal to expand Camp Sweeny, the juvenile detention facility in Alameda County. The investment and creation of more than a hundred new beds for Black and Brown youth in Alameda County, while simultaneously closing our public schools, is racist and disrespectful to the students and communities of Oakland. The young people in Oakland would be better served by reallocating the millions of dollars earmarked for a prison camp toward investing in public education in Oakland.

Our coalition stands with thousands of Oaklanders to demand:

- A moratorium on public school closures until Summer 2022, to give time for the community to assess the impact of the Schools and Communities First Act,
- Local government stop the construction of the unnecessary County probation camp, Camp Sweeney,
- OUSD School Board reverse Board Policy 6006 that directs the Superintendent to create a citywide plan for closing public schools,
- That all government entities involve the people of Oakland in reforming and making fiscal decisions about public schools.

The students, families, and educators of Oakland need City Council members to openly support public education in Oakland. Resolution 87522 is an important step in the right direction.

The Oakland Is Not for Sale Coalition asks the Councilmembers on the Education Partnership Committee to show their support for our demands. We ask the Councilmembers from this committee to reaffirm their strong commitment to keeping public schools open as set forth in Resolution 87522 by:

1. Joining the Oakland is Not for Sale Coalition in demanding that the Oakland Unified School District place a moratorium on all school closures and consolidations until Summer of 2022 and immediately cease the Blueprint for Quality Schools process;
2. Supporting the District in finding ways to engage school communities in all future fiscal and school site decisions;
3. Demand that the Joint Ed Committee employs a fully independent, unaffiliated consultant to create a report on the projected impacts of school closures, to include: impacts on school feeder patterns, changes to OUSD enrollment numbers and total projected loss of ADA for Oakland public schools, and an examination of the impact on

all sub groups outlined in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (English language learners, African American students, SDC students, foster youth...);

4. Make a formal inquiry into the County's proposal to expand Camp Sweeney and work with our coalition to stop this expansion; and
5. Work with our coalition to identify all measures we can take to stop the dismantling of Oakland's public schools.

The Oakland Is Not for Sale Coalition will continue to organize, mobilize and pressure all officials to take a stand against the dismantling of Oakland's public school programs. We hope to partner with everyone who wants to work for the well being of our public school communities and resources.

Sincerely,

Oakland is Not For Sale Coalition
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