Dr. McKenna, Mr. Schmerelson - Ensuring Local School Site and Community Control, Authority, Autonomy and Choice Regarding Safe Campuses and the Protection of Our Students and Staff (Res-029-20/21) (NoticedMay 25, 2021)

Whereas, In May 2018, the Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District entered into a three-year employment contract with Mr. Austin Beutner to serve as Superintendent of Schools for the Los Angeles Unified School District;

Whereas, The hallmark characteristic of Superintendent Beutner's leadership and reorganization plan and policies, enthusiastically supported by a majority of the Board and numerous local nonprofit organizations, has been the decentralization of resources and decision making in order for each school site and school community to be able to assess the unique needs and priorities of their students, families, local neighborhoods, and community partners;

Whereas, In an April 21, 2021 letter to the Board declining an extension of his contract, Mr. Beutner stated that with the support of the Board and that of many partners in labor, government, industry, the community and the homes of each family and every student, we have "(t)ransformed Los Angeles Unified from a top-down, one-size-fits-all bureaucracy into 44 nimble local teams, each dedicated to the community it serves" and unequivocally asserted that community schools unite families, educators, and community partners to provide all students with quality instruction, enrichment activities, physical and mental health services and social emotional supports which create the opportunity for children to succeed in school and in life;

Whereas, As the largest authorizer of charter schools in the nation, the District has long been considered a major proponent of allowing parents and families to choose or be assigned to publicly funded schools that are independent, autonomous and not bound by centrally generated policies and practices that their local school community may not support, thus allowing families who live in the attendance areas for independent charter high schools such Granada Hills, Pacific Palisades, Birmingham, and El Camino Real to assess the needs of their schools and local communities, freely discuss options, and make decisions concerning critical issues such as school climate, health, safety and protecting students and staff - discussions and decisions not currently available to neighboring affiliated charter high schools such as Sylmar, Taft, Cleveland, and Reseda;

Whereas, Public opinion research on school safety involving over 44,000 students, parents and school staff was conducted in October, 2020. Survey results showed a broad range of opinions about what public safety measures respondents preferred or made them feel most comfortable including key findings that, across the demographic subgroups surveyed, perceptions of the Los Angeles School Police Department were largely positive, and among parents and staff there was significant opposition to reducing the presence of school police;

Whereas, Attitudes toward school policing are likely viewed through the lens of perceived levels of campus safety and perceptions of school police, including the following:

 The broadly held view that campuses are generally safe before, during, and afterschool;

 High degrees of consensus that school police are engaged in emergency response

activities and protecting campus perimeters, but less certainty around other areas of

engagement; and

 Less familiarity with segments of the community that may be negatively impacted by school policing;

Whereas, In the 2019-20 school year, out of 115,000 services calls, there were only 10 total complaints against school police from staff, parents or students;

Whereas, Each school site is responsible for developing a comprehensive safety plan based on the needs of the campus climate, which is reflective in the cornerstone value of the Community Schools model of local autonomy and decision making, yet school-based administrators have expressed profound unreadiness and a lack of empowerment as it relates to accessing all available resources to aid in optimizing school safety for their campuses in a way that aligns with the true spirit of local control;

Whereas, The Board and District staff - understanding that the District covers an area totaling 710 square miles, including most of the city of Los Angeles and all or portions of 26 cities and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County - are currently engaged in profound discussions about the need for equitable resource allocation based on the recognition that school communities have different needs based on unequal and different opportunities, resources and experiences; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the students, parents and staff who constitute the different and diverse school communities throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District be granted the authority and flexibility to discuss, determine and decide on the measures they believe will improve and maintain positive school climate and safety on their school campuses.