



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 28, 2020

City of Malibu
Reva Feldman, City Manager
via email: rfeldman@malibucity.org

Dear Reva,

We have been working in good faith with the Malibu City Council to find an approach that allows the separation of the SMMUSD into two separate districts with equity and fairness for all students as the guide. We had made substantial progress toward an equitable financial solution and then the pandemic struck.

Last week, without contacting the district, the Malibu City Council abandoned our collaboration, making a unilateral decision to pursue the [petition](#) it filed with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) on Aug. 31, 2017. We are disappointed in what appears to be a retreat to a position we thought we had all moved beyond in our discussions. We are deeply skeptical of what we've seen thus far.

From what was shared at the City Council meeting on October 12, it appears that Malibu has chosen to move forward with an approach that would separate SMMUSD into two very unequal districts — where Santa Monica students receive approximately half of what Malibu students will receive on a per student basis within five years. Equity and fairness appear to have disappeared from the formula.

The [presentation slide](#) shown at the Malibu council meeting clearly reflects the inequities in regard to estimated per pupil funding. Their projections demonstrate Malibu starting at \$16,494 per student, while students in Santa Monica would be funded at \$13,592. Based on the Malibu formula for revenue growth, in year five, Malibu students will receive \$25,998 per student, while Santa Monica per student funding will be \$14,264: a five-year growth rate of 58% in Malibu vs 5% in Santa Monica. To further disadvantage Santa Monica students, that nominal annual growth is based on a set of assumptions for local revenues in Santa Monica that are unrealistic.

On top of the unfairness, this action comes at a time when we are all addressing a worldwide pandemic. Our teachers, administrators and staff are all working hard to provide the best distance learning education possible for all students in Malibu and Santa Monica. The district is following comprehensive county protocols in preparation for schools to reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.

The School Board voted to oppose a similar approach on Dec. 14, 2017 in this [resolution](#). Our consultants will be preparing a detailed analysis and response to the Malibu City Council's petition. Additionally, LACOE will be scheduling a public hearing following the reinstatement of the petition.

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Board of Education: Oscar de la Torre • Craig Foster • Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez

Laurie Lieberman • Ralph Mechur • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Dr. Ben Drati

On behalf of the children and families of both Santa Monica and Malibu, SMMUSD remains open to returning to the negotiating table in order to continue working collaboratively towards a thoughtful and strategic plan that will allow for the successful creation of two new school districts.

If City Council chooses to return to the negotiating table and embraces a genuine effort at addressing serious equity concerns, they have our commitment that the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District delegation will be ready to work with you. We are firmly focused on the future.

Sincerely,



Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent, SMMUSD

cc:

Malibu City Council
SMMUSD board members
Santa Monica City Council
SMMCTA president
SEIU president
SMMPTA
Community for Excellent Public Schools
Santa Monica Boys & Girls Club
Malibu Boys & Girls Club
AMPS
Media
SMMUSD parents
SMMUSD staff
Santa Monica Education Foundation
Financial Oversight Committee
M-FDAC
SM-FDAC
District Advisory Committees / DELAC
Santa Monica City Manager
Santa Monica City Attorney
SMMUSD community email list
Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
Santa Monica for Renter's Rights
Senator Ben Allen
Assemblyman Richard Bloom
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Senator Henry Stern
Samohi Puente
AAPSSG