

**March 30, 2020**

**To the Oakland Unified School District Board of Education and Superintendent, FCMAT, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Karen Monroe, and California State Superintendent Tony Thurmond,**

As community organizations and individuals representing thousands of people who work on educational justice issues in Oakland and the Bay Area, we collectively demand that you cease all planned permanent school closures, mergers, and charter co-locations immediately, given the COVID-19 crisis. Teachers and classified staff facing permanent school closures, mergers, or co-locations cannot be forced to decide their future plans in the midst of a crisis. Parents faced with permanent school closures should not be forced to determine what schools their children should attend next year by OUSD's enrollment deadline of April 9.

Teachers and classified staff, parents, and students in our region are required to "shelter in place" indefinitely and there is no way to responsibly continue with planned permanent school closures and co-locations.

- Parents are not able to visit any potential new schools to determine where their children should go next year (virtual visits are not nearly enough - parents need to be able to see active teaching environments to make informed decisions.)
- The Board of Education is not able to allow for meaningful public engagement or participation, a necessary component of school closures/mergers/co-locations
- Closure/merger/co-location "design committees" cannot meet in a way that allows for public participation, engagement, or accountability
- Students will not be able to return this academic year to schools that are planned to be closed in May, and will thus face the severe trauma of never reuniting with their classmates before being shuffled to a new school
- Teachers and classified staff have no opportunity to engage with closure/merger/co-location planning
- Teachers will not be able to clean out classrooms
- Teachers and classified staff cannot make decisions about whether to accept changed teaching or other assignments
- School districts cannot be allowed to stop investigating outstanding UCP complaints and creating a safe environment for students

- School districts cannot be allowed to usurp power from parents, students, and community members by creating LCAP funding allocations that will not include trauma-informed allocations with an equity lens

In addition to the permanent school closures and co-locations, FCMAT and the OUSD Board of Education should not proceed with other decision-making on other significant issues, such as budget and layoffs, at a time when the community is not in a position to fully participate. Taking such actions would be using a public health emergency for undemocratic purposes. This participation includes budget and LCAP conversations. Parents, students, and community members have a legal right to participate in these conversations. Moreover, School districts must ensure any of these significant decisions regarding closures do not stop investigations that will help to ensure that students can return to a safe and welcoming environment. Thus, the District must ensure that it continues to review and follow-up, if possible, on all UCP complaints.

This global pandemic has changed everyone's lives, and business as usual cannot continue. In an effort to flatten the curve, ordinances at the local as well as international levels have implemented shelter in place regulations. Restaurants and bars have shuttered, laying off millions of American workers and leaving them completely destitute-- many of whom are parents in OUSD. Millions of immigrant families cannot access benefits of any kind. Our communities are suffering deeply. Even our state legislature and OUSD itself is not functioning at its full capacity-- certainly not in a way that allows for the kind of community engagement necessary to carry out these plans. As the very real possibility of a global recession becomes a pressing reality, **now is a time to take care of ourselves and our families, not cruelly proceed with planned permanent closures, mergers, and co-locations for which the District has not fully developed a plan, and cannot develop one without the full participation of teachers and classified staff, parents, and students. Our communities deserve better; we deserve democratic, meaningful, and substantive participation in decisions that drastically affect our lives.**

Many of us are familiar with the methods utilized around the country and the world by powerful elites during times of crisis and upheaval, taking advantage of our hardships and disorientation as an "opportunity" to push through deeply unpopular and undemocratic policies and proposals. We expect those who are in charge to refrain from making major decisions that will impact the future of our schools at a time when the public cannot fully participate, and we hope that District and State authorities will adopt the spirit of compassion and cooperation which so many other Oaklanders have chosen, including, for example, the vote by Oakland's City Council to halt evictions, and will follow governmental state, county and federal public health policies to cease business as usual.

If the District and relevant State authorities choose to continue to pursue its agenda of planned closures, mergers, and co-locations, we will be forced to expose and escalate our call for the removal of leadership that is violating county, state, and federal public health orders to cease

business as usual. **ALL PLANNED PERMANENT CLOSURES, MERGERS, AND CHARTER CO-LOCATIONS MUST BE STOPPED IMMEDIATELY.**

Sincerely,

ACLU Northern California  
Action 2020  
Alameda Labor Council  
Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
Patrisse Cullors, Black Lives Matter  
California Educators United  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Dayle Veasey, President CHUMS, Inc., SF Bay Area Chapter  
Community Works  
CURYJ - Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice  
East Bay Community Law Center  
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
Faith in Action  
Just Cities/Dellums Institute  
Jason Toro, Principal Consultant, Justice Reenvisioned  
Justice Reinvestment Coalition  
Keith Brown, President, Oakland Education Association  
Oakland Not For Sale  
Oakland Rising  
Parent Voices Oakland  
Restore Oakland, Inc.  
Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth  
SEIU Local 1021  
United Teachers of Richmond