



March 10, 2021

Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization
Octavio Castelo, Secretary to the County Committee
9300 Imperial Highway
Downey, CA 90242

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL: Castelo_Octavio@lacoecoe.edu

Dear Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization members:

On behalf of the City of Santa Monica, we are writing in response to the City of Malibu's October 12, 2020 Petition ("Malibu Petition") to split the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District ("SMMUSD") into two separate districts.

At our meeting on November 10, 2020, the City Council re-affirmed our support for such a split but only if the terms of separation, including but not limited to, the division of revenues and assets, are fair and just to students in Santa Monica schools and provide robust and equal educational opportunity for both Malibu and Santa Monica students. The City of Santa Monica opposes the Malibu Petition because it fails to meet these objectives.

The Santa Monica community deeply values our schools. We have long invested in SMMUSD programs, facilities, and services that consistently provide high-ranked, excellent public education and also support all of our students, including our most vulnerable students in Santa Monica and Malibu. Today, many SMMUSD revenues originate exclusively from the Santa Monica community, and, together as SMMUSD, we are able to achieve a District that meets Santa Monica's high expectations for equity and excellence even as Malibu students benefit from comparatively higher per pupil expenditures and lower student/teacher ratios.

The Malibu Petition would jeopardize this careful balance and the wellbeing of all SMMUSD students by reducing per pupil expenditures for Santa Monica students for the next quarter century while creating a far better funded and significantly less diverse Malibu USD. Indeed, SMMUSD projections show that in year one of divided districts created under the Malibu Petition, Malibu USD would be approximately 78.4% White with per pupil funding starting at \$27,651, while Santa Monica USD would have the benefit of SMMUSD's hallmark diversity but be funded at only \$13,759 per pupil (less than half



the per pupil expenditure for Malibu USD students). This dramatic inequity would only worsen over time: Pursuant to the proposed formula for revenue growth, Malibu schools would receive approximately \$37,599 per student in year five, while Santa Monica per student funding would be \$15,486.

In Santa Monica, we believe that access to opportunities for learning and growing for all members of our community is key to our individual and collective wellbeing. We take pride in supporting SMMUSD as it strives to achieve its mission across the Santa Monica and Malibu communities of "extraordinary achievement for all students while simultaneously closing the achievement gap." Because the Malibu Petition would be in grave disservice to SMMUSD students, we implore you to disapprove the Malibu Petition and to ensure that, if SMMUSD is to split into two separate districts, the division of revenues and assets will be fair and just to students in Santa Monica schools and provide robust and equal educational opportunities for both Malibu and Santa Monica students.

Sincerely,

Sue Himmelrich
Mayor

Kristin McCowan
Mayor Pro Tempore