

Dear Superintendent and Board of Education,

We write as a collective of principals across Oakland Unified School District with deep respect for the complexity and the challenges facing our system, and a shared commitment to the success and well-being of our students. We first want to acknowledge and appreciate your leadership during this time, and offer our partnership in facing these challenges together. Accordingly, we feel an urgent responsibility to raise serious concerns that are affecting our ability to run our school sites and that have diminished our confidence in our current leadership. We raise these concerns publicly, transparently, and after significant drafting and collaboration.

Our primary concern is the academic progress of our students. Currently, in OUSD, only 30% of our 33,755 students are reading on grade level. If disaggregated by ethnicity, the situation is significantly worse for Black and Latinx students. As educators, we are accountable to the brutal fact that we are failing our children at a systematic level.

We also know, as educators, it is within our reach to change this reality and build better schools that meet our students' needs. We need a school system that supports us to face the academic struggles before us. We need a clear vision for academic success, undergirded by strategic and transparent fiscal and labor decisions.

Instead, we are struggling to pursue the basic conditions for success. We spend more money per pupil than most other districts in California; however, our decisions as a district have resulted in a structural deficit and cash-strapped schools. Cash-strapped schools will not change the conditions that result in 70% of students reading below grade level. As educators, we are concerned that recent decisions -- negotiated by Talent and Legal and supported by the Board -- have neglected informed stakeholder input, sidelining important voices from across our system. We are concerned that these decisions will lead to decreased professional development at school sites, poor transparency in decision-making, and increased fiscal instability.

### **Fiscal Stability**

We are concerned that if the district is unable to adopt a balanced budget for the 2026–2027 fiscal year, we will face additional reductions that will not allow us to combat our academic gaps. Moreover, stripping programming down to the bone does not address our structural deficit. With no clear vision for a restructured district that prioritizes academic success, decisions can only be short-sighted and haphazard. Short-term stabilization means little when decisions are not filtered through a broader vision for academic success.

An example of flawed short-term, hasty decision-making is the current stabilization strategy of reclaiming supplemental and concentration funds to cover base expenses. Supplemental and

concentration funds are meant to be used to pursue equitable outcomes -- critical in a district that has been historically marred by inequity for students of color and economically disadvantaged students. Coupled with the reductions in support staff across the district, the net result is a reduction in specialized funds on the backs of the students and families who need it the most. This is antithetical to our equity values as a district.

Although a highly politicized issue, the experts have been clear with us: we operate too many schools for a district of 33,755 students. We can no longer afford to postpone difficult decisions about how many schools we operate. If we neglect this work, we will continuously starve our schools of the resources we need to improve our outcomes for all students. Critics point to school closure as an equity issue; we posit that the gradual starvation of our schools is also an equity issue, leaving us without the necessary resources to serve any child.

You have the opportunity to move OUSD toward long-term fiscal stability through challenging and complex decisions. That is the job. We ask that you embrace this call to action.

### **Increased Collaboration & Transparency in Decision Making**

While we recognize the efforts that led to a tentative agreement and the avoidance of a strike, we are concerned about the reduction of professional development time that was negotiated out of the teacher's contract. In secondary schools, this represents a 50% reduction of professional learning time. In elementary schools, shockingly, this allows for only one hour per month of professional learning led by school leadership. This is a concerning reflection of our investment in growing the skills of teachers who are responsible for developing early literacy skills in our children. In a system that should center academic outcomes, these shifts feel misaligned with strategic instructional development. We believe this moment calls for deeper—not reduced—collaboration among central office, principals, and teachers to pursue coherence in teaching and learning. Once again, we will not address the brutal fact of 70% of students reading below grade level by drastically reducing time for professional development at school sites.

This decision highlights the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders -- especially people with experience as educators or in leading school sites -- are at the table for negotiations. Anyone rooted in the daily reality of leading schools and contending with the academic growth of children would not sacrifice teacher professional development within a teacher's contract.

Furthermore, in a time of transition and fiscal crisis, hiring leadership with a depth of experience in fiscal crisis management is tantamount. We recognize that it is important for a superintendent to build their team, however, we expect that those decisions reflect strategic consideration. During a fiscal crisis, the superintendent unilaterally made a decision to hire a CBO who has never held such a role previously in district fiscal services or cross-departmental operations. Given the nature of our fiscal crisis, we expected a more transparent and

exhaustive search for a veteran fiscal and operations leader. The decision leaves us concerned that we are not approaching the fiscal crisis in a serious manner, given how grave the cuts to our school sites and central office have been. We are also questioning the necessity of adding \$450,000 to the Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) contract, slated to be discussed at the upcoming April 22 board meeting. The services listed are the duties of a CBO. When we are laying off employees, why are we paying for an expensive contract for fiscal support if we have also appointed a CBO?

We are also concerned about the process and transparency involving leadership selection. When Dr. Johnson-Tramell was removed from her position as superintendent, the community was told that the Board would engage in an extensive, nationwide search for our next leader. We have not been updated as to the state of the permanent superintendent search. The contract with HYA indicated that there would be engagement with our community at multiple levels and through multiple venues. The timeline stated that the firm would present candidates to the board in January and February, with a finalist selected by April 2026. Where were the opportunities for stakeholder input? In what ways were school leaders consulted to support the construction of a leadership profile for our next system leader? And, if the search has been suspended, where is the transparent communication regarding this?

The sidelining of important, school-based voices in negotiating labor agreements, hiring of management positions, and on the Senior Leadership team is worrisome. The voices of stakeholders who labor in school sites across the district are an invaluable source to creating a vision of academic success. Without them, we are concerned that we will not be able to achieve our mission of ensuring all of our students are academically fit to pursue choice-filled lives.

We want to work in partnership with a superintendent and a board of directors who are unequivocally committed to creating the conditions that will foster the academic progress of our students, create transparency in decision-making, and achieve fiscal stability. Accordingly, we would like to schedule a meeting with you all to discuss our concerns and the following requests that we believe would improve conditions in OUSD:

- 1: Future contract negotiations with OEA cannot sacrifice professional learning time. We cannot continue to meet academic goals, critical to our mission and our city's future, by reducing collaborative professional development time at school sites.

- 2: Going forward, a member of PAC should serve on the district bargaining team to ensure that professional learning is protected in future OEA contracts. The bargaining team must include members who have led schools and understand how contracts are operationalized and their impact on student learning.

3: Engage in a transparent process to hire a Chief Business Officer who has significant and relevant operational experience across a range of departments and in managing a school district toward fiscal solvency. OUSD needs experienced managers of fiscal and operational crises.

4: Accelerate an authentic superintendent search with a leadership profile developed through stakeholder engagement. Our students, families, and schools deserve an opportunity to determine the leadership committed to the long-term vision of our district.

5: By Summer 2026, initiate a process to determine how we can reduce our footprint. We cannot maintain the current structure and operate 81 schools with skeleton services for young people and their families. We need to make deeper investments in quality and stability so that we can execute on our vision for all children to thrive.

We, the undersigned, are OUSD principals representing two thirds of OUSD's schools and serving more than seventy-three percent of OUSD students:

In partnership,  
Ronald Towns, Allendale Elementary School  
April Harris-Jackson, Bret Harte Middle  
Theresa Lozac'h, Burbank Early Learning Center  
Joseph Blasher, Castlemont High  
Katherine Givler, Centro Infantil CDC, Emerson CDC, &  
Stonehutst CDC.  
Caroline Guggino, Chabot Elementary  
Peter Van Tassel, Cleveland Elementary  
Amy Carozza, Coliseum College Prep Academy  
Staci Ross-Morrison, Dewey Academy High  
Jonathan Tran, Edna Brewer Middle School  
Viet-Ly Gonzalez, Elmhurst United Middle  
Iris Castillo, Emerson Elementary School  
Minh-Tram Nguyen, EnCompass Academy  
Lusa Lai, Franklin Elementary  
Nidya Baez, Fremont High  
Amapola Obrera, Frick United Academy of Language  
Cody Marshall, Fruitvale Elementary  
Megan Sweet, Garfield Elementary  
Juan Vaca, Global Family  
Sharon Travers, Global Family Preschool & Bella Vista CDC  
Victoria Rosales, Harriet Tubman, Arroyo & Yuk Yau CDCs  
Annie Hatch, Hillcrest K-8

Lissette Averhoff, Hoover Elementary  
Roma Groves - Waters, Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary  
Tammie Adams, Horace Mann Elementary  
Alessandra Cabrera, Independent Study, Sojourner Truth  
Raquel Rodríguez Jones, International Community School  
Swaicha Chanduri, Joaquin Miller Elementary  
Alesia Eutsler, Kaiser Early Learning Center  
Faris Jabbar, La Escuelita Elementary  
John Stangl, Laurel Elementary  
Alykhan Boolani, Life Academy of Health and Bioscience  
Kateri Dodds, Life Academy of Health and Bioscience  
Mukta Sambrani, Lincoln Elementary  
Roberto Lascon, Lockwood STEAM Academy  
Darielle Davis, McClymonds High School  
Jonathan Mayer, Melrose Leadership Academy  
Shalonda Gregory, MetWest High School  
Bianca Lorenz Gonzalez, Madison Park Academy 6-12  
D Pharr-Matthews, Markham Elementary  
LaTasha Ellison, Manzanita Community  
Rachelle McManus, Manzanita SEED Elementary  
Tom Felix, Oakland International High  
Pamela Moy, Oakland High  
Martel Price, Oakland Technical High  
Jen Heeter, Piedmont Avenue Elementary  
Ana Vasquez, Ralph J. Bunche Continuation High  
Natasha Flint-Moore, REACH Academy  
Cynthia Bagby, Redwood Heights Elementary  
Joao Solomon, Roosevelt Middle  
Carmelita Reyes, Ruidsdale Continuation High  
Vanessa Flynn, Sequoia Elementary School  
Rebecca Huang, Skyline High  
Lacy Lefkowitz, Think College Now  
LaShante Scott, Thornhill Elementary  
Sara Allen, United for Success Academy Middle School  
Mirsha Heredia Gomez, EdD, United Nation CDC,  
International CDC  
Tierre Mesa, Urban Promise Academy  
Dr. Lucinda Taylor, Westlake Middle School  
Neha Ummat, West Oakland Middle School

