



PRESS RELEASE

Poway Unified School District

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Poway Unified School Board Passes Anti-Racism Resolution

(San Diego, CA) – At its June 25 meeting, the Poway Unified School District Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution publicly affirming the District’s commitment to fighting racism and correcting systemic inequity. During the meeting, dozens of public comments were read aloud in support for the resolution. The comments also addressed the need for specific plans to accomplish the steps outlined in the resolution, including more diverse hiring, more diverse curriculum, and expanded anti-bias training for students and staff.

The resolution was co-authored by Board President Michelle O’Connor-Ratcliff and Trustee Dr. Darshana Patel, with assistance from Student Board Member Mariana Akins. Dr. Patel stated that she was inspired by PUSD students who shared their own experiences with racism at recent peaceful protests, “This made the call to action very urgent for us and brought it very close to home. We felt very deeply about the need to take action in our own District. We didn’t want to wait.”

“Once you know, you have to do better. And this is our declaration of our intent to do better and in what ways we can do better. This is a positive next step. The Board is going to keep this at the forefront, and we want to see action,” said Board President Michelle O’Connor-Ratcliff.

Adding to the urgency, hundreds of PUSD students have been anonymously sharing their own experiences with racism on the Instagram account @blackinPUSD. PUSD has reached out to the account creators to discuss how the District can better support students of color. “I’m proud of our students having the courage to make their personal stories public so that it allows us to engage in difficult conversations and make the uncomfortable more comfortable. If we don’t engage in difficult conversations, we can

never learn and grow, to arrive at a place of greater understanding of our own biases, whether unconscious or intentional,” said Superintendent Dr. Marian Kim Phelps.



On Friday, Dr. Phelps, along with other District leaders, met with black student leaders representing all five of PUSD’s comprehensive high schools. The students collectively highlighted three areas of suggested improvements: student education and assemblies, more diverse role models and allies among staff, and restorative justice for racism-related incidents. The group will

meet monthly to work with District leadership to make progress on goals and to collaborate on improving student engagement and school culture. “We are excited to work alongside our students to affect real change in PUSD. We want our community to know: racism will not be tolerated in Poway Unified,” said Phelps.

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