



June 10, 2022

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

It was brought to the attention of the Saugus Union School District (SUSD) this week, that there was a concern related to the continuation of the County Sheriff's School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. While SUSD does not have a direct contract for SRO services, we fully support the continuation of the program through our partnership with the William S. Hart Union High School District and the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station. The SRO team provide a tremendous service to the SCV community through mentoring students (those who need strong role models and those who have made poor choices), supporting school staff with challenging student, parent, and community situations, and countless other events where their ability to BOTH protect and serve are needed.

After reading Supervisor Mitchell's motion for changing of the SRO contract to include additional oversight, it appears to suggest an inappropriate set of conditions that will only limit the positive impact of the SRO program and limit the ability of the local school district to have appropriate control of the programs/staff provided on their campuses. School districts in Los Angeles County have experienced more than two years of extreme County oversight on their operations. Oversight that was created by individuals that are not familiar with or who operate within the unique school situations where the work required is being done. Districts/schools best understand the needs they have for the supervision and safety of students, staff, and community members. They should be the people who determine the criteria by which the SRO program is implemented.

We understand concerns expressed in Supervisor Mitchell's motion (i.e., assertion that research supports SRO programs having a "negative impacts on students"), but we also would like to remind the Supervisors of the research connected to the success of community policing. In an article from Yale News it was noted that "visits by uniformed police officers substantially improve people's attitudes toward the police and increase their trust in law enforcement" (Cummings, 2019). SRO's are not general community law enforcement, but they are an integral part of the school community (campus and surrounding neighborhoods) they serve. The deputies follow the law, but also work closely with school leadership to ensure appropriate student-centered interactions in general. If we want to ensure positive effects occur between law enforcement deputies and students then their interactions must be the same daily positive interactions that the SCV SRO team has with students in Santa Clarita every day.

Finally, the collection of data suggested by the motion may provide rigorous accountability that is important in evaluating the effectiveness of any program, however, data collection should not impede the development of the relationships that are a critical component of an effective SRO program. The data collection suggested in Supervisor Mitchell's motion would make it

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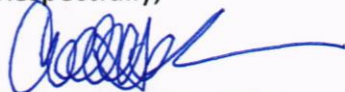
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virtually impossible for an SRO to develop real and lasting relationships with students as they would be consumed by collecting demographic data about each student required for future reports. Quality research and data analysis includes both quantitative and qualitative information. No qualitative data is suggested in this motion.

Districts across the state collect information related to discipline and corrective actions for students as part of the annual California Dashboard requirement. These situations may involve SRO's and can be quantified by use of existing data. California Dashboard metrics/data is sufficient in determining the effectiveness of school in connecting and engaging students, parents, and staff in the teaching and learning process. It should be sufficient in evaluating the effectiveness of the SRO program that is part of the school community, too. If data is needed for oversight, perhaps use of existing data should be considered before adding additional layers to a process that is about developing positive relationships.

This letter is sent on behalf of the Governing Board of the Saugus Union School District, its Superintendent, its leadership, its staff, its students, and its parents. We hope that you renew the SRO contract for the future, allow for Districts to determine the specific working relationships with the SRO teams, and use existing data to evaluate the program annually. School Resource Officers are sworn law enforcement, but their day to day activities are an integral part of the fabric of a school community and should be evaluated based on that context rather than purely on the context of law enforcement in general. Again, we support the SCV SRO program and hope you will consider the information contained here as you make decisions for the future of the program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Hawkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Colleen Hawkins, Ed.D.
Superintendent