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**Empowering Parents to Choose Their Leaders**

*L.A. Unified Board Seeks to Include All Parents in School Board Elections*

LOS ANGELES, November 5, 2019 – Recognizing the critical impact of parent voice, the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education took the first step to expand the electorate for school board elections to include all parents, grandparents, and guardians, regardless of immigration status. Board Member Kelly Gonez authored the resolution that will create a study group to work in partnership with immigrant rights' groups, labor partners, parents, and the City and County on next steps. Ultimately, expanding the electorate will require a successful ballot initiative.

"I grew up in a family of immigrants, so this resolution means so much to me personally and professionally. Our immigrant communities are deeply vested in our public schools," Board Member Gonez said. "Regardless of citizenship status, every parent deserves a say in who represents them, their children, and their schools. Cada voz cuenta."

An important topic that the study group will consider is how to ensure the confidentiality of immigrants who register to vote, to avoid retaliation from the current and future federal administrations.

"Especially in today's anti-immigrant climate, we are particularly focused on assuaging any fear of retaliation," Board Member Gonez continued. "The study group will be looking at ways to protect our families. Previous work in other states, and Neighborhood Council voting here in L.A., offer up potential pathways to address those valid concerns."

"Our parents are our partners in the education process and it is critical that all of our parents have access to the democratic process that chooses this Board," Board President Dr. Richard Vladovic said. "We hope that this study group can think of ways to include all parents while keeping their immigration status private and safe."

"As a safe haven district, we strive to ensure that every Los Angeles Unified family feels, safe, welcome, and empowered to take part in the education of their children," Board Member Nick Melvoin said. "I look forward to studying new ways to raise all parents' voices so they can truly can be heard in the decision-making process."

Other organizations that joined in support of the resolution include the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 99, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), the California Community Foundation, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), and the CLASS Coalition.

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