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California State Senate

SENATOR
DAVE MIN

THIRTY-SEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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CYBERSECURITY &
IDENTITY THEFT
PREVENTION

January 11, 2023

Rick Ledesma, Board President
Orange Unified School District
rledesma@orangeusd.org

Dear President Ledesma:

I am writing you regarding the recent actions the Orange Unified School District Board of Education ("Board") took at a special meeting on January 6, 2023 to terminate the contract of Superintendent Gunn Marie Hansen, to place Assistant Superintendent Cathleen Corella on paid administrative leave pending an academic audit, and to replace these two administrators with interim superintendent Edward Velazquez and interim assistant superintendent Craig Abercrombie.

California school boards have the right to fire and hire school board employees. This authority is derived from and under the control of the California Legislature and is accompanied by certain duties and responsibilities, which we in the Legislature are responsible for overseeing. As a member of the Senate's Budget Subcommittee on Education and as the State Senator representing the majority of families served by Orange Unified School District ("OUSD"), I am concerned because the decision to terminate Superintendent Hansen and Assistant Superintendent Corella, both having consistently earned exemplary performance reviews, comes at significant cost to California tax payers and could significantly affect student outcomes.

I am also deeply troubled by reports that the Board majority who voted for these actions may have communicated with each other and decided this course of action prior to the January 6th special meeting. California law prohibits a majority of a local legislative body, such as OUSD, from meeting or deciding on agenda items in private, unless it is a properly noticed closed session meeting that is appropriately reported out to the public. It has come to my attention that you may have contacted Mr. Abercrombie prior to the January 6th special meeting and informed him that he would be named Acting Assistant Superintendent for OUSD, suggesting that you knew at that point that you had the votes to suspend or terminate the Assistant Superintendent Corella and replace her with Mr. Abercrombie. This communication, along with the manner in which the January 6th special meeting was called and conducted, has raised concerns that the Board majority violated California's Brown Act by communicating with each other and deciding its action in private, prior to the public January 6th special meeting.

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I am hoping that you can help clarify the confusion around the January 6th special meeting and in the process help to reassure me and your constituents that you have not breached your duties or violated the law. In particular, I was hoping you could answer the following questions:

- Did you communicate with Trustee Madison Miner, Trustee John Ortega, or Trustee Angie Rumsey prior to the January 6th meeting to discuss the suspensions or terminations of Superintendent Hansen or Assistant Superintendent Corella or both? If so, did you meet together or use a series of communications of any kind, directly or indirectly, to discuss or deliberate whether the board should remove Superintendent Hansen or Assistant Corella or both?
- Did you communicate with Trustee Madison Miner, Trustee John Ortega, or Trustee Angie Rumsey prior to the January 6th meeting to discuss the appointments of Mr. Velazquez as interim Superintendent or Mr. Abercrombie as interim Assistant Superintendent or both? If so, did you meet together or use a series of communications of any kind, directly or indirectly, to discuss or deliberate whether the board should appoint Mr. Velazquez or Mr. Abercrombie or both?
- When you contacted Mr. Abercrombie prior to the January 6th special meeting, what was the basis for your apparent statement that he would be appointed as acting Assistant Superintendent following the January 6th special meeting?
- Did you contact Mr. Velazquez prior to the January 6th meeting to inform him that he would be appointed as acting Superintendent?
- Did you consult with legal counsel before the January 6th special meeting on the potential legal issues—especially regarding whether you might be violating California law and/or exposing the Board or its Trustees to civil and criminal liability—associated with suspending or terminating Superintendent Hansen and Assistant Superintendent Corella? If so, who did you consult with and when?
- It is estimated that the termination of Superintendent Hansen and Assistant Superintendent Corella and securing their replacements will cost OUSD \$1.3 million dollars, not including potential legal fees and other liability. Prior to the January 6th meeting, did you engage in any type of analysis of the fiscal impacts of this decision? If so, what were your findings?
- The Board acted during the middle of the school year, a few days before students were set to return to the classroom. Abrupt changes in key leadership could have significant negative impacts on the education of OUSD students. Prior to the January 6th meeting, did you engage in any type of analysis of the impacts on student outcomes and learning because of the suspension or termination of Superintendent Hansen and Assistant Superintendent Corella? If so, what were your findings?

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- Did you or anyone else from the Board contact Superintendent Hansen, prior to the January 6th meeting, to inform her of your concerns about her performance?
- Did you or anyone else from the Board contact Assistant Superintendent Corella, prior to the January 6th meeting, to inform her of your concerns about her performance?
- Did you consider other candidates besides Mr. Velazquez or Mr. Abercrombie to serve in the roles of interim Superintendent and assistant Superintendent? How many other candidates were considered?

Thank you for your service and your prompt attention to this matter. We both have the honor and privilege of serving the parents and students of OUSD. I look forward to working with you to help restore the public's confidence in the integrity and excellence of OUSD schools.

Sincerely,



DAVE MIN
Senator, 37th District

DM:jf

cc: Andrea Yamasaki, OUSD Board Member, Trustee Area 1
John Ortega, OUSD Board Vice President, Trustee Area 2
Ana Page, OUSD Board Member, Trustee Area 3
Madison Miner, OUSD Board Member, Trustee Area 4
Kris Erikson, OUSD Board Member, Trustee Area 5
Angie Rumsey, OUSD Board Member, Trustee Area 6