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AUSD Takes Another Step to Secure Stable Funding

AUSD joins California State PTA, California School Boards Association, Association of California School Administrators, and Alameda families in Lawsuit

Alameda, Calif. – Thursday, May 20, 2010 - Today, the Alameda Unified School district and several Alameda families took an important, historic step toward fixing the broken system California uses to fund public education.

“We are proud that Maya Robles-Wong, an Alameda High School student, is the named plaintiff in this historic effort to secure stable and sufficient funding for all of California’s schools,” said President of the Board of Education Ron Mooney.

Together with eight other school districts, families from across California, the California State PTA, the California School Boards Association, and the Association of California School Administrators, AUSD and the Alameda families have filed a lawsuit aimed at radically reforming the State’s public school finance system. The lawsuit alleges that the State’s current finance system violates the California Constitution. The State must create a constitutional finance system that ensures stable and sufficient funding and provides equal opportunity for all.

Superintendent Vital is optimistic, “This is a proud and exciting step for Alameda and also a step that many Alamedans have been requesting for a long time. It is important to note that **the new** lawsuit will not fix the District's immediate funding crisis because litigation of this type takes many years to get through the court system.” Despite the great promise this litigation holds for the future, it will not stop the seven million dollars of cuts to our schools for the coming school year or the additional ten million in cuts for the following two years that we must make if Measure E does not pass. To stop these devastating cuts, AUSD still needs the critical funds Measure E will provide.

The community has asked repeatedly for AUSD to pursue “solutions at the state level.” AUSD and Alameda community members have worked for more than three years researching and helping organize this lawsuit. We are very happy to announce that the results of that work can now be made public.

The filing of this long-awaited lawsuit is another example of AUSD’s commitment to make every effort to solve our fiscal problems on all fronts, including:

- (1) Streamlining and continuing to cut more from our already lean District Office,
- (2) Negotiating major concessions from our employee groups (including layoffs and furloughs),
- (3) Making difficult programmatic changes such as increasing class size,
- (4) Raising critical revenue that the state can not take away to get through these difficult economic times (Measure E), and
- (5) Preparing to implement millions in cuts even if Measure E passes.

Bill Koski, Stanford Law Professor and one of the attorneys representing the plaintiffs in the case, explained that in selecting school districts to participate in the case, “the legal team looked for districts that are well run, managed efficiently and spending their dollars wisely.”

AUSD and the Alameda families will be represented by an extraordinary legal team that will be working at no cost to the District on this critical, long-term undertaking. The coalition of lawyers and law firms working on this case includes Olson Hagel & Fishburn LLP, Bingham McCutchen LLP, and the Youth and Education Law Project at Stanford Law School.