



PARENTS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

Contact: Bret Caslavka, 619-985-7219, Craig Sherman, Esq. 619-702-7892

Parents for Quality Education with Plaintiffs Margaret Sanborn and Ricardo Castillo have filed a lawsuit against San Diego City Council, San Diego Unified School District and Registrar of Voters of San Diego County in violation of California Voting Rights Act.

SAN DIEGO (October 1, 2018): Challenging San Diego City Council members and San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to comply with the California Voting Rights Act, Craig Sherman, a Professional Law Corporation, filed a lawsuit in the Superior Court of the State of California in the County of San Diego on September 28, 2018 against San Diego City Council, San Diego Unified School District and Registrar of Voters of San Diego County, in violation of California Voting Rights Act of 2001 on behalf of Parents for Quality Education (PQE), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization, interested parties Margaret Sanborn, longtime advocate in the Asian Pacific Islander community, and Ricardo Castillo, retired US Navy and teacher for 22 years.

In 2016/ 2017, the City of San Diego received enough complaints and concerns from the community regarding SDUSD board elections that they asked the San Diego Grand Jury to investigate the current election process for SDUSD trustees. The Grand Jury findings of May 2017 state “sub-district elections alone would assure voters of each district would receive a fairer representation than an “at-large” election.”

In March of 2017, PQE initiated a local San Diego initiative, “Community Voices for Education” (CVE) to bring accountability, transparency, and accurate representation to the San Diego’s public education system. PQE began advocating to reform the election methodology for School Board Election by objecting and demanding that City Council revise the election process for the SDUSD School Board to have Sub-district only elections and either follow the model of City Council elections or Change the City Charter.

In May 2018, the District created and administered their own public survey where 60% of the survey stated they wanted District only elections, yet the District failed to give the voters what they wanted. On July 23, 2018, PQE through Community Voices for Education sent a demand letter to City Council requesting they place District Only Elections for SDUSD on the November 2018 ballot by the August 6 deadline or face a possibility of a lawsuit violating the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). The



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CVRA states at section 1407. "An at-large method of election may not be imposed or applied in a manner that impairs the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice or its ability to influence the outcome of an election, as a result of the dilution or abridgment of the rights and the privileges of members of a protected class." The City Council did not respond to the request by the August 6, 2018 deadline.

Since its inception, the SDUSD has had a total of three (3) Latino and one (1) Asian trustee. The student population for SDUSD is 45% Hispanic and 30% African American, Asian, Chinese, Asian Pacific and multi-racial. Because of the abridgment of voter rights, over 75% of the family populations currently in the SDUSD have been deprived of voter representation. "It is time for the community to vote for candidates that truly represent the interest of the community it serves and have electoral choices" said Margaret Sanborn, one of the Plaintiffs. "When those elected to serve on behalf of the community find it difficult to respond to the public they serve, then it becomes the sole of the citizenry to bring our democratic systems back into balance" added Plaintiff Ricardo Castillo. "The Grand Jury has spoken, and the community has spoken. We can no longer allow City Council members and San Diego Unified School District Trustees to use children as pawns for their political agendas," said President of Parents for Quality Education Bret Caslavka.

On behalf of all residents within the jurisdiction, PQE with Plaintiffs Margaret Sanborn and Ricardo Castillo is proceeding with all available legal remedies to ensure the City Council and SDUSD comply with the California Voting Rights Act.