

Sample Board Comments from Gente Organizada and Pomona Student Union's Campaign in Pomona USD

You can watch the youth leaders providing these comments here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnGqGF4FLx13xKT2zAhNz1Q/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=0

“My question to the board is how does the allocation of funds designated specifically for low-income austere youth and english learners towards an in Proctor’s around school and more security like officers specifically improve the academic performance of these students. Previously I attended an outcome meeting PUSD where funds were discussed and when I asked about the student survey conducted by PUSD months prior I asked if students directly were asking for more security and for more Proctor’s on campus and if that was something that was operating. My question wasn’t directly answered and I come to question the implementation of these officers and how that helped students academically in their present and future lives. Being a student of USD and I am a product of that at USC, I’ve been in the PM district since I was three years old, I believe the key to improving the lives of our students begins by improving mental health services and others and more to see where the students struggles. The implementation of further practice would be for all students not simply for the ones marked which misuses the funds like printing the incident and are only supposed to be used for such students. I come to ask for a stop or what I believe will not directly benefit all students because its marked for all students well it’s technically helping all students but only marking them for english learners which goes back to my question, ‘Why is it only marked for specific students if it is going to help all students?’ Thank you.”

“Good afternoon my name is Ev Lopez, I go to Ganesha High School and I’m a member of Pomona students union. I came here to this district being an English Learner and mastering a new language is honestly really hard. Yet I fail to understand how cops and security can help anyone learn a new language. Cops and security didn’t help me learn English and they won’t help me get into college. There is no reason to use this money meant for English learners or foster youth or low income students to get cops and security on our campuses. What are they supposed to do? There is no need to approve this. Instead, why not use the money for aids such as for better or more tutors to support these kids to actually succeed in school or a counselor to aid these kids mentally? That this money is meant to be spent on a certain group, does that mean that these cops and security will just police the English Learners and foster youth or low income students in our school? Thank you for your time.”

“Hello, my name is Iris Villalpando and I’m a product of the Pomona Students Union and a student representative also from xxx high school district. So, throughout my time with the schools from xxx to xxx, I’ve had many different encounters with campus officials and though most of them weren’t terrible encounters, none of them give me a reinforcing sentiment. I never once felt safe with them on campus. If anything, they were the reason I felt unsafe. It’s because of this that I don’t understand why campus officials or any type of law enforcement on campuses would benefit students academically, especially low income, foster, and English learning youth. Many students tend to feel unsafe when they’re on campus mainly because their president represents the fact that there is a problem within the school. The moment the type of law enforcement is on campus with students are more focused on finding out why they’re there than their actual education. Not only are they a distraction, they tend to police students more than protect them. Xxxx for example, make a trip to the restroom feel wrong and unnecessary, and this is just one example of many different scenarios in which they make students feel like they are “bad.” Because of this, I would like to ask that this budget not be approved. Instead of the funds being focused on school campus security, we should focus on finding out exactly what makes students feel unsafe and/or uncomfortable and provide them with better resources. For example, hygiene products to ensure students feel comfortable within the classroom instead of having to leave school or not attend at all. Another ideal investment would be providing students better mental health support resources. Thank you.

“I am a low income English learner during my years at school I focused on doing good while having to learn a new language that no one spoke in my house. I had to work a part-time job because my family financially unstable and being the second oldest and my family it was my responsibility to help my mom. While working on my goal to enter college, I was scared for my family because the political environment we are currently facing has cast fear upon us. Working, learning, and understanding was hard. I was unable to focus and having security constantly stop students on my way to class did not make my school experience comfortable. As I felt I was doing something wrong. Even though knowing I did nothing. Seeing security made me feel worried, I was alarmed. I was stressed, afraid, and I felt trapped. My name is Melanie Andreo. I am a member of Pomona Students Union and I am a product of PUSD class of 2018. Although I understand securities are meant to protect students by making sure nothing happens in their school campuses, there has been cases where school security has been used for in school suspensions, which feeds into the school to prison pipeline, and not the school to college pipeline. Students are pressured in many different ways, though all we need at times is guidance and support, and not security and authority. I strongly believe these funds for English learners, foster youth, and low-income should focus specifically on services and programs that can help students behaviors and emotional well-being, which is as important as the students safety. We believe that LACP Should be reviewed again and with more consideration of student opinions, who want the best for the schools that they currently attend, or have families that attend. We respectfully ask that you do not approve the budget, and instead keep the following ideas into consideration: more mental health counselors that can understand and address a students social and emotional well-being to have a better achievement in schools,

better art and music programs to allow English learners, foster youth, and low-income students to foster their creativity while finding their passions and improving academic success, more foster youth support, and more tutors to help students in core subjects because often times there's little to no support at home. My question is, oh, our question is how will security officers help with emotional well-being of students and understand how a student feels even if the budget is specifically for English learners, foster youth, and low-income? We ask that the budget does not get approved and thank you so much for listening and for the update and I'm looking forward to reading the letters " __", thank you.

"My name is Paige Bruin and I encourage you not to pass item 902 by final two tonight. What happens when children commit crimes, even violent crimes, are charged as adults? This is a question that you all should seriously consider before you approve the LCAP budget, specifically because it includes a hiring of Pomona police officers as campus security personnel. All of you must remember seeing the 2015 video of Christian Aguilar being beaten at the fair when he was only sixteen. He was charged with a felony after the incident because of the way the encounter was depicted by the Pomona police officers. A few months later, Jesus, Victor and Jose Polaiio were beaten by Pomona officers and also charged with felonies. All four boys were proven innocent, and both families filed civil lawsuits based on the contention that the officers fabricated actions listed in the reports following the encounters. In those two cases alone, the city paid out a total \$1.2 million in damages. Can Pomona Unified school district plan for that kind of hit to the district budget "you are self insured"? A little over five years ago, one of your kids named Caesar broke into a Pomona Unified elementary school with two of his friends. Caesar was sixteen. One of the items they stole was an elmo portable projector. Pomona police officer Trevor Steveson responded at an alarm called at the school and spotted the three, and when they saw him they ran. Officer Stevenson gave chase and according to the officer, Caesar threw a metal crowbar towards him as they were running. The crowbar harmlessly clattered in the street, but according to Stevenson, the boy also swung a backpack at the officer when the chase slowed. Only Caesar was apprehended. When interrogated, the boy said he had dropped the crowbar and he claimed to remorseful. He claimed that he had stopped running so he could get to his knees on the ground to surrender and he claimed that Officer Stevenson used excessive force by tackling him. The boy did not use force in defending himself. The crowbar had simply been discarded, not thrown at Officer Stevenson and the projector was surely not a deadly weapon, yet your student was charged and convicted of three felonies, assault on a police officer with a deadly weapon, obstructing or resisting an officer by force or violence and commercial burglary. There was no intervention, no 'Big Brother' talk, no rehabilitation and he was straight up sentenced five years and eight months. This was your student, a kid who would not graduate high school with the rest of his classmates. The boy is now an adult felon, not able to vote, get a passport or work for a municipality. His life is ruined for the admittedly poor decision to steal an elmo projector in Pomona. The actions of PPD did not contribute to improve behavior or attendance, and did the opposite."

“My name is Miranda Sheffield and I am a resident here in Pomona and I wanted to make it very clear that I’m opposed to 9.02 regarding the L cap and I wanted to be very specific about why I am opposed to this on a very personal level. I am a product of the Pomona Unified School District. I graduated 2004 from Pomona high school and I have also worked directly with foster youth for the duration of my professional career and I know very clearly that the youth that I work with, the number one way that their foster care experience began to get complicated was their trauma was, actually shown more as behavioral issues and that their trauma was showing more as we need to put more authority on them and I see this idea of wanting to use three to seven million dollars to have more, um, to have more police officers or even resource officers on the campus would not be beneficial and to also say that when I was at Pomona high, not known to a lot of my other folks that I went to school with, I am also someone who has directly grown up in foster care myself and I know for sure one of the things that was not needed was for me to be introduced to more, um, to get normalized to have more police officers on campus and as of right now we see with foster care, especially here in Pomona because I worked here with a lot of the youth here in Pomona. Foster care right now in the state of California and Los Angeles county, disproportionately African-Americans are overrepresented in the foster care system so when you’re saying that you’re going to put more resource officers only in Pomona Unified School District schools that means directly there’s going to be more harm to black bodies. More harm to them being sent through juvenile justice when there’s a movement right now to invest into restorative justice, to invest in actual things that are more humanizing than criminalizing us. And I know for sure, which you, um, Richard Martinez, that you also have your own story of having a foster care background as well and I know that with our shared experiences this is not something that would help us be able to heal and to be able to address the trauma that we have experienced going through foster care and as people of color the one thing that we do not need and we do not need to advance more is to having a greater police state in the educational system, especially when it’s disproportionately going to pack those who are black students who are also in foster care . Thank you

“Good evening. My name is Brenda Gomez, I recently graduated from high school last year and I currently attend UC Berkeley. As I met more folks at Cal I was exposed to alot of different resources that I wish Pomona unified would have provided for me as a first generation low-income career student. They had on site counselors for documented queer students, they had Ivy which is a renowned rigorous college preparatory program, they also have college tutors that are not just reserved for average students because not everyone can enjoy an avid if they don’t have the space in thier schedule. So I thought what better way to use El Cap than this. Militarizing our schools, policing our schools just doesn't make sense and we shouldn’t normalize this concept and I also saw in the consent calendar a proclamation and recognition of the LGBTQ community queer youth dont know what proclamation is. Your actions speak louder than words. We’re saying we support queer youth but what exactl are you

doing to support queer youth. I wasn't exposed to a therapist until college because my family didn't have the funds and we didn't know how to reach out but if we had something on sight it would have helped me so much more, I could have thrived so much more. I just ask that you take into consideration that our proclamation is not going to do much is we don't put our words into actions. As a product of USD, I ask that you reconsider the way that we allocate our funds and also take into consideration that we most of them are low income and people of color and there's a large community of queer people you are not noticing. Let's not normalize the concept of policing our schools, our schools should be places of nurturing and caring and is supposed to help us expand our horizons in learning. Thank you."

"Good evening President Guzman, members of the board, Superintendent Martinez, school staff and of course our beloved community. My name is Benjamin Wood, but I think most of you know me because of the work that I do with a community organization here in the city that has had a very fruitful collaboration with the district in the past, so I am here as a concerned citizen who has been working on police accountability issues on a regional level for many years. I understand that there is a budget laid on this agenda item sets aside anywhere from \$3 million to \$7 million to pay for security personnel and to place Pomona police officers on different PUSD campuses. We live in a system where we try to deal with social problems such as poverty, racism and violence by using the criminal justice system and while there being some advances in recent years, it has not changed the prevailing circumstances which is mass incarceration. It's a system that has a one-size-fits all approach to problematic behavior, it's basically 'lock em up'. When this approach prevails on school campuses we have what social scientists call the school to prison pipeline. I'm in touch with parents and members of this community everyday who would much rather see their kids on a pipeline to colleges, careers, personal development and growth, contributing to their community, and making a change for the better. So I would urge you all as a board to take a look at these funds, look at their intended purpose and ask whether allocating them to a police force that is accountable to no one would really benefit the English learners, foster youth, and low-income students more than tutors, early intervention and teacher and staff using their intended benefit. There is a crisis in this country in terms of the relationship between the police and a community that is rooted in the excessive use of violence and I think this agenda item should really cause us to question this concept of security. Your forces think that the only way to be 'secure' and 'safe' is if there's a man with a gun nearby. We really need to rethink this and challenge this dominant narrative and the monetary interest behind it, and imagine a concept of security that is really rooted in community, shared values, and systems of support that would prevent students from falling in between the cracks and resorting to antisocial behaviors as a means of communication and cries for help. So, this is one of the things we learned when I was in my credential program, and I have a Masters of Education, that everything the students do in the classroom is a way of communicating so when we have issues with behavior maybe that's one of the things that we need to consider. So I would just ask you as someone standing in solidarity with the Pomona Student Union to at least hold off on approving this item and analyze it more in depth before you make a decision. Thank you."

