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March 2, 2021

Members of the Board of Education
Fontana Unified School District
9680 Citrus Avenue
Fontana, CA 92335

REOPENING OF FONTANA SCHOOLS

Honorable Board Members:

The Fontana Chamber of Commerce is writing to urge you to reopen Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) schools. Fontana children are approaching a full year without the benefit of critical in-classroom instruction. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that evidence suggests that many K-12 schools that have strictly implemented mitigation strategies have been able to safely open for in-person instruction and remain open. They also indicate, as we all know, that schools play a critical role in promoting equity in education and health for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and the absence of in-person educational options may disadvantage children from low-resourced communities, which may include large representation of racial and ethnic minority groups, English learners, and students with disabilities.¹ In the 2019-2020 school year FUSD had **30,817** disadvantaged students designated as recipients of free/reduced-price meals, including English Learners & Foster Youth.² This amounts to **85%** of the student population.

Based on the CDC advisory indicated above, the fact that **85%** of the FUSD student population are disadvantaged, and given that the racial makeup includes **87%** Hispanic/Latino and **5%** African American students, there is extreme urgency to resume in-classroom instruction for parents who choose to send their children back to school.³ Based on the data, it can be surmised that many parents within FUSD do not have the income flexibility to enroll their children in a private school, and are counting on the Board of Education to act in their best interest, and to give them a choice to return to school.

We can no longer delay giving our parents the choice to send their children to school. Online school has proven itself to be ineffective, and children need to return to socializing with their peers for both their mental health and physical well-being.

As a representative of employers, the chamber understands that you might be apprehensive in returning to in-classroom learning. Yet, we know that our nation has been conditioned over the past year to wear masks, wash hands

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and socially distance. We also understand that each school district in San Bernardino County has received federal funds to support proper equipment purchases for adhering to specific protocols. In addition, vaccines are becoming more available and new cases and hospitalizations are down significantly. This combination gives teachers the highest level of safety available for returning to the workplace.

We feel teachers and staff are essential. We always have. Teachers and school resources are vital to our society. We trust them and know that they will keep the protocols as well as train our young people to follow the protocols. Adhering to the rules, as is expected of all of our Fontana employers and employees, gives all of us the confidence to move forward. For these reasons, we urge you to act at your March 3, 2021 meeting by resolving to re-open FUSD schools on a date certain.

Sincerely yours,

Troy Lindstrom
Chairman of the Board

¹Center for disease control and Prevention Website, Accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html#executive-summary>

²Ed Data Education Data Partnership Website, Accessed March 1, 2021, <http://www.ed-data.org/district/San-Bernardino/Fontana-Unified>

³Fontana Unified School District Website, Accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.fusd.net/cms/lib/CA50000190/Centricity/Domain/267/Fontana%20Flash%20Facts-Demographics.pdf>