

CITY OF OAKLAND



CITY HALL • 1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612
#LoveLife

REBECCA KAPLAN Vice Mayor
NIKKI FORTUNATO BAS Council President
SHENG THAO President Pro Tem
CARROLL FIFE Councilmember D3

Date: February 15, 2022
To: Members of City Council and Members of the Public
From: Vice Mayor Kaplan, Council President Fortunato Bas, Pro Tem Thao, and Councilmember Fife
Re: Resolution Calling On The California Governor and Legislature To Protect Our Schools And Our Health And Community By: (1) Amending The State Budget To Protect Our Hardest Hit Communities By Preventing School Closures And Eliminating Debt; (2) To Amend State Law, To Revise The “Average Daily Attendance” Formula, To Remove Penalizing Schools When Students Are Sick; And (3) To Direct The City Administrator To Share A Copy Of This Resolution With The Governor, Oakland's State Representatives, And Oakland's Lobbyist

Dear Colleagues on the City Council and Members of the Public,

On January 31st, 2022, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) revealed its plan to either close or merge 16 of the district’s 80 schools. The proposed closures have sent shockwaves throughout the community, galvanizing students, teachers and families to oppose the proposed closures. We know school closures are a disinvestment within the neighborhoods they serve, removing central hubs for community-building, disrupting learning, and exacerbating decreasing enrollment rates. In response to the threat of school closures, this resolution calls upon the State to eliminate OUSD’s outstanding state debt to prevent closures, and amend state law to revise the Average Daily Attendance formula to remove penalizing schools when children are sick.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on our school system, disrupting student’s lives and ability to learn, creating difficult and stressful environments for Oakland teachers, students, and families, and intensifying existing issues around equity within our schools. However, due to the enduring strain of partially-paid state loans, the district is proposing school closures as a means to balance their budget during this already turbulent time. Yet, [research](#) shows that cost savings from school closures are generally limited, particularly in the short term, and the task of putting closed buildings to productive use is extremely difficult.

Permanent school closures can have and have had a detrimental effect on communities of color across the city, and specifically on Black communities. OUSD has a history of disproportionately impacting majority Black schools for closure, closing 16 majority Black schools in two decades. Unfortunately, the list of schools slated for closures currently is no exception - with all eight schools proposed for closure being majority Black schools.

City Council
February 15, 2022
File # 22-0062

With California anticipating a \$45.7 billion surplus for the 2022-23 fiscal year, eliminating OUSD's remaining state debt through state funding would require an infinitesimal amount, less than one fifteenth of a percent, of the State's operating surplus.

In addition to eliminating OUSD's debt, more must be done structurally to address how we fund public schools in California. Currently, the State's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) allocates funding to school districts based on their average daily attendance—the average number of students in class each day throughout the school year. However, the ongoing effects of the pandemic—such as student and staff quarantines, challenges implementing remote learning, impacts of months of lost or insufficient instructional time, and stress and trauma from the pandemic and social isolation—continue to affect school attendance levels. According to a survey by the California Collaborative for Education Excellence, 90% of school districts experienced declines in attendance in 2020-21, and districts also reported spikes in increased chronic absenteeism.

Therefore, this resolution seeks to protect our schools, community and public health by urging the Governor and State Legislature to amend the state budget to protect our hardest hit communities by preventing school closures and eliminating debt, amend state law and revise the Average Daily Attendance formula to remove penalizing schools when students are sick, and direct the City Administrator to send a copy of the Resolution to Governor Newsom, Senator Nancy Skinner, Assemblymembers Mia Bonta and Buffy Wicks, and Oakland's lobbyist.

We respectfully request your support for this important measure.