



CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO

Office of the City Council

January 5, 2021

The Honorable Alan Sarver
President
Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees
480 James Avenue
Redwood City, CA 94062

Dear President Sarver:

As the newest member of the East Palo Alto City Council, I am writing to you to express grave concerns regarding the current relationship between the Sequoia Union High School District and East Palo Alto.

Throughout my campaign, concerned parents would go out of their way to share with me just how disconnected they feel from your school district. This is not to say that you have not sought to build a relationship with our community. But what is evident is that, when it comes to an East Palo Alto strategy, the approach has always been one where the Sequoia Union High School District has imposed its views rather than allowed for our community to act as partners.

This disconnect is further exacerbated by the fact that at every level of your leadership teams, from your administration to principals and vice principals, the diversity of our region is not reflected. This is not coincidence, but rather, a strategic choice to only have one perspective at the table. I am thankful for the addition of leaders like Trustee Stevenson to the Board. This change however, cannot rest on one person alone. It requires the coordinated efforts of a whole set of stakeholders.

Although I am certain this is difficult to read, this is not intended to be antagonistic. This letter is intended to be the beginning of an honest conversation about how we can work to ensure that we do not lose another generation of East Palo Alto students.

Given your history of social justice, I am certain that we can build a bridge that can help me in my goal of creating economic opportunities for East Palo Alto.

The fight to save my community begins and ends in your classrooms.

This pandemic has only widened the gap between those with ready access to educational resources, and those students who may feel pressured to take an extra job to help their unemployed parent. Now more than ever, the District needs to proactively reach out to their East Palo Alto families and reassure them that this year of socially distanced learning does not result in their child losing an entire year's worth of schooling.

For that reason, I would like to work with you and your colleagues to help make the Sequoia Union High School District a place where East Palo Alto is represented within your leadership teams.

Allow me to make personal for a moment what is at stake. As the first person in my family to attend college, I've seen the power a quality education has in our community. Statistically speaking, it is the single-most reliable predictor of socio-economic mobility. I ran for office on a pledge—a pledge that on closer examination is not so much a pledge, but a fundamental right: to make experiences like mine not the exception, but the norm.

Let us work together to deliver that right.

I thank you in advance for your time, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Antonio López
Councilmember
City of East Palo Alto