

January 14, 2021

Dear President Sarver, and the Sequoia Union District Board of Trustees:

We are a coalition of parents, students, and community members who at one point in time, attended your schools, sat in classrooms with your teachers, attended meetings and conferences with faculty and administrators.

Right now, we are concerned.

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. While we are thankful for the addition of leaders like Trustee Stevenson to the Board, we recognize that this change cannot rest on one person alone. It requires the coordinated efforts of a whole set of stakeholders.

For years, we have dealt with a whole host of issues that boil down to not having representation at the top. We have seen assistance for students with special needs go unnoticed. We have experienced and/or witnessed (cyber)bullying that wasn't effectively addressed. We had teachers who made microaggressions or explicitly racist remarks against us and were not held accountable for their actions. We have seen an alarming amount of police presence in our hallways and our worried about our safety.

The root of these problems is this: how can school leaders govern effectively if most of them have not and cannot step in the shoes of the students they serve?

We recognize that these issues begin and end with the leadership.

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 parents.

Now more than ever, the District needs to listen to the needs of the students and families. And we, as direct members of that group, are telling you that need: diversify your leadership.

We strongly support East Palo Alto Councilman Antonio López's recent calls for diversification of the senior administration and sign this statement in spirit of solidarity with his efforts. We remain hopeful that the Board lives true to its role: that

the districts are “responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities.”

To see ourselves reflected in the ethnic and racial make-up of our principals, in the vice principals, and in the administration—that is our highest priority.

Sincerely the undersigned,

Julian Garcia, Sequoia District Alumus Class of '09

Lidia Garcia, Parent of Sequoia Alum

Uriel Hernandez, Sequoia District Alumus Class of '09

Kendall Lee, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '15

Olivia Luna, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '16

Raven Malone, Community Member

Ulises Cisneros, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '17

Adolfo Vargas, Community Member

Francisco Lopez Zaragoza, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '20

Samantha Salinas, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '20

Francis Santos, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '20

Alonso Gonzales, Sequoia District Alumnus Class of '20

Bryan Lopez, Current Student of Sequoia District, Class of '21

Andrea Reyna, Community Member

Christian Sbragia, Current Student of Sequoia District, Class of '22

Adrian Gutierrez-Garcia, Current Student of Sequoia District, Class of '21

Fernando Gutierrez-Garcia, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '18

Fernando Tapia, Current Student of Sequoia District, Class of '21

Alejandro Valdez, Current Student of Sequoia District, Class of '21

Veronica Garcia, Alumnus & Parent of Sequoia District Student, Class of '94

Angela Lopez, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '20

Lizbeth Villalobos, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '20

Katie Maravilla, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '20

Sasha Geonzon, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '15

Cristian Cisneros, Alumnus of Sequoia District

Ananaia Tangi, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '20

Miranda Simes, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '16

Antonio Z. Lopez, Parent of Sequoia District Student

Simran Chawla, Alumnus of Sequoia District, Class of '15