

Transcript of the April 8, 2026, Orange County Board of Education Regular Meeting

BARKE: Darou, will you please do a roll call? Oh, and by the way, Dr. Sparks reached out to me and she's going to come in about an hour late or 30 minutes late.

HENDRICK: Perfect. They're watching for her.

BARKE: But she'll be here. Thank you.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Present.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

BARKE: Okay. May I have a motion to adopt the agenda?

WILLIAMS: Make the motion.

SHAW: Second.

BARKE: Okay. All those in favor?

VALDES, SHAW, BARKE, WILLIAMS: Aye.

BARKE: Okay. Passes 4-0. And a motion for the minutes as well, please.

WILLIAMS: Make a motion.

SHAW: Second.

BARKE: All those in favor?

VALDES, SHAW, BARKE, WILLIAMS: Aye.

BARKE: Okay. And that passes as well. Anything else we need to do?

HENDRICK: Just close the meeting.

BARKE: Okay. And now we're going to go ahead and close the meeting to the public to do the interdistrict transfers.

[The Orange County Board of Education goes into closed session and returns.]

SHAW: Give it a real healthy one.

BARKE: A real healthy one? Oh, it's good. We got it. Oh. She told me 4:30, so I imagine any moment. Let me just see if she's communicated.

SHAW: We have a trustee that's out of the country. We're trying to Zoom her in.

BARKE: She says she's on Zoom, so have we let her in? We'll just give Dr. Sparks one minute to come in and then we'll get started.

SPARKS: Here I am. Can you hear me?

BARKE: Yes. Welcome.

SPARKS: Perfect.

BARKE: All right. Now we can get started. I'd like to welcome everybody. Great crowd tonight. Thanks for all coming out. We appreciate you and we're going to get started with our invocation. Oh, I'm sorry. And I should give you a nice introduction actually. Let me do that. Cantor Jenna Sagan is from Congregation B'nai Tzedek, and we've had her before and she's amazing. So, you're in for a treat.

CANTOR JENNA SAGAN: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity to offer a moment of reflection. I stand before you tonight as a parent, as well as a representative of our local clergy, and I hold in my heart the wellbeing of both our children and this community tonight. In many wisdom traditions, we're taught a powerful lesson through the metaphor of building a house. It's the wise builder who lays a foundation on solid rock, ensuring the structure can withstand any storm. This board is tasked with a similar sacred duty to lay a firm and enduring foundation for all of our students. The decisions made in this room become the bedrock of their education, shaping their ability to think critically, to act with compassion, and to build their own futures on a foundation of knowledge and integrity. It is my prayer tonight that you have the wisdom to build with foresight, the strength to lay a foundation that is equitable for all, and the shared vision to create an educational community that will stand strong for generations to come.

I will conclude this invocation with the words of a prayer song that speaks to the ultimate foundation of our world. It is a call for hope and a charge to us all, and the lyrics are a call and response. We start with Olam chesed yibaneh. I will build this world from love. *Olam chesed yibaneh.* And then we say, *yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai.* Let's try it. *Olam chesed yibaneh. Yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. Olam chesed yibaneh. Yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. Olam chesed yibaneh, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai.* Now in English, *I will build this world from love, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. And you must build this world from love, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. And if we build this world from love, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. Then God will build this world from love, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. Olam chesed yibaneh, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai. Olam chesed yibaneh, yai dai dai, dai dai yai dai dai dai.*

BARKE: Thank you so much. And I just want to mention that those of you that don't know that our invocations are on a first come, first serve. You can go on the website and sign up. So, if anyone is interested in doing invocation or know somebody that would be, we'd love you to sign up. Thank you very much. We appreciate you very much. And next, I'd like to invite our Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer to do our invocation.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY TODD SPITZER: Well, thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam President. We are not going to sing the Pledge of Allegiance, but if you would please stand if you are able, face the flag, right hand over your heart, ready, begin.

AUDIENCE: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

BARKE: Okay. Do we have any introductions besides our district attorney?

HENDRICK: We have none.

BARKE: Okay. President's prerogative, I would like to now move our district attorney with his presentation ahead of public comment. Hopefully, that will be all right with everyone if we make that minor adjustment this evening.

WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

BARKE: Okay.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY TODD SPITZER: So good evening, Madam President, Members of the Board, Honorable Dr. Bean, Superintendent and guests. Tonight, we're going to talk about our GRIP program, which is our gang reduction intervention program. I have Senior Deputy District Attorney Shannon Back here who runs the program day to day. She's going to introduce our investigators and other staff. I've known you all for a very, very long time and we're very, very appreciative for everything you do to protect public education. Some of you know, like Dr. Williams, who and I started about the same time as trustees, you, what, 30 years ago, myself on the Brea-Olinda school board 30 something years ago. And then before that, I was a high school

English teacher. And I will just tell you of all the jobs I've ever had, the most interesting, exciting, and I think influential and important job was educating our young people.

And I'm just so glad throughout the years, irrespective of whatever positions we've all held, and many of us have held very different and diverse positions in the community. We've never lost our resolve to be committed to in helping children. And so tonight, this program, our GRIP program, is designed and with your support, will continue to support those who find themselves in difficult ways in their education journey, but with the support of really committed and dedicated professionals are finding their way. And I will tell all of you, and I hope you all agree, especially we have a lot of parents here. The only thing that gets you out of a particular situation that you find yourself in, whether you fall into it naturally, you're born into it, whatever the circumstance, the only way you can change your future is through your education. And public education to me is one of the most important things.

I've always been part of public education institutions throughout my career and my education, and it has served me very, very well. I'm forever grateful, and I can't thank you enough for your time. This is Senior Deputy District Attorney Shannon Back. Thank you.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY SHANNON BACK: Thank you. Good evening, Board President Barke, Trustees, and Superintendent Dr. Bean. Thank you for having us here today, and thank you, DA Spitzer. I'd like to introduce other members of the GRIP team who are here today, starting with Assistant District Attorney Katie David, Investigator Kevin Reese, and Investigator Jose Flores, who work day in and day out to support the program students. I'd like to play a video for you all that was recently released on KCAL 9 to give you an overview of what this program looks like. Hopefully, my technology will work here.

[Video plays]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The lure of the streets can sometimes be too much for vulnerable young people, but there's an effort in Orange County to steer kids into the right path.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's backed by schools, community groups, and law enforcement as well. KCAL's Rina Nakano shows us some success stories.

RINA: 22-year-old Samuel Perez is a wildland firefighter for the Orange County Fire Authority, but his road to get here wasn't easy.

SAMUEL: I remember like sleeping on the floor from most of my childhood.

RINA: He's one of six kids. Father, a gardener, mother, a maid, and an older brother who was in jail. 10-year-old Alexander Gonzalez Luna also dealing with challenges. In 2021, his father died of COVID, and this year his mother died of a stroke. He's now being cared for by his aunt. Both these young boys struggled in school and faced the lure of gangs.

JOSE: Hello, sir. How are you?

ALEXANDER: Good.

RINA: Enter OC GRIP, the Orange County Gang Reduction and Intervention Partnership.

JOSE: We focus on our attendance, on our academics, and our attitude.

RINA: It's a multi-agency community program headed by the Orange County DA's office that provides mentors like Investigator Jose Flores to guide students away from gangs.

JOSE: I've not once met somebody that was forced to join a gang or that was forced to get involved in criminal activity. These people help you volunteer into this kind of life.

RINA: Officer Flores says the key is to identify these vulnerable kids and swoop in on them before the gangs do.

FLORES: Were you doing your work? Were you doing homework?

RINA: Flores has been working with Alex for a little over a year. The one shy boy with no hope now has big dreams.

JOSE: Okay. Very well.

ALEXANDER: I'm hoping to go to a good college so that I could get my degree to go to NASA.

RINA: For Perez, it was a GRIP soccer camp in the fourth grade that reeled him in.

SAMUEL: The third day, that's where it kind of just struck me. It was more than just a soccer camp. It was more like life lessons.

RINA: Perez saw friends joining gangs, but his GRIP mentor kept him on the path to academic, athletic, and career success.

SAMUEL: I didn't know I'll be in this position, especially growing up.

RINA: It's why he says he's able to live his dream and the reason he hopes to pay it forward.

SAMUEL: I really looked up to the people that gave back to me, and so I guess being there is choosing not giving back. It just means a lot to me too. So, I know it'll touch someone. It's like it did to me.

RINA: In Trabuco Canyon. I'm Rina Nakano. KCAL news.

[Video ends]

DISTRICT ATTORNEY SHANNON BACK: GRIP is currently in 62 schools countywide and provides services to fourth through eighth graders in those schools. GRIP provides educational curriculum to parents, faculty, and students at those selected schools, as well as educational and recreational opportunities. These next slides show some of our data outcomes so that you can see some of the successes of the program that we've had over the years. The first data outcome that

you see here reflects a youth resiliency survey, which is based on pre and post surveys that we utilize with our participants. Shows that 91% of youth participants reported an increase in resiliency from the beginning and conclusion of that reporting period.

Going down to the next data outcome, that outcome indicates that 70% of our parents reported an increase in family functioning within the home after receiving our services. Moving on to the next slide, you'll see that 99% of the faculty reported in this reporting period that they increased their knowledge on the topics that we presented to them. And finally, that 94% of prevention referrals resulted in linkage, meaning that the referrals that we are making available to our students and families, whether it be counseling, food resources, after school opportunities, 94% actually resulted in linking up with that referral source. So we really appreciate the opportunity to be here today and speak about the GRIP program that we very much believe in. And I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have for me or for other members of the team.

BARKE: How do you go about getting schools to sign up? Is there a way that we can help you get more schools to sign up so you have every school signed up? It seems like a great program.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY SHANNON BACK: Yes. We do have a wait list of schools that are interested. We try to provide services to as many schools as we're able to do so. We do have two different programs within the GRIP overall program. The first program is called GRIP 1. Those schools are receiving more intensive services and they have full-time dedicated support. So, for example, the investigators here today are full-time assigned to those schools within those cities. Because we don't have the staffing to get to all of the schools that are requesting our support, we have a secondary program that we call GRIP 2, and we make those teams up of volunteer deputy district attorneys, volunteer probation officers who are using their own time, so slightly less intensive, but it allows us to get to more schools.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY TODD SPITZER: If I could just add quickly on that. Sorry, Sharon. There was a lot of damage done to law enforcement in the last five to seven years. And as Dr. Williams knows, having served with the Orange County Sheriff's Department as a level one reserve for 20 years, and I was a level one reserve, myself for the city of Los Angeles working patrol, it's not only difficult for us to recruit police officers today, it's getting more and more difficult. We're also having a difficult time actually recruiting prosecutors, lawyers who want to go into prosecution. So that has been a significant hit. And then a lot of school districts because of state funding and federal funding are also facing, I don't need to tell you as trustees, budget cuts. And as a result, they can't necessarily afford the threshold amount of money. That's their financial commitment to get GRIP in their schools.

So, we have a shortage of staff, we have funding imbalances. And I mean, just look at the message, right? A young man who probably never thought he could work his way out of his environment is now an Orange County Fire Authority firefighter. A young man who was working with our investigator says he wants to be an astronaut. That's essentially what he's saying. We just sent a crew to the backside of the moon and they're the farthest away from earth that any human beings have been. We may end up on the moon with a station and then next go to Mars. Wouldn't it be amazing if that young man was the first astronaut or part of a team that went to Mars? And my point is simple. This program creates and fulfills dreams, and it actually

allows young people who didn't even know they were entitled to dream, to actually dream and have those dreams fulfilled. So, thank you very much.

BARKE: Thank you very much for the presentation. So, we now have a ...yes.

SHAW: All right. We're doing a picture.

BARKE: All right. Now back to the fun stuff. We are going to go with public comment next. Looks like you have quite a collection.

SHAW: Every time I turn around, we're getting more public comment cards. We set aside 30 minutes for this. We're almost at exactly 30 cards. If it sounds okay to everybody, can we do one minute per speaker? Is that okay?

BARKE: Yep. That works.

SHAW: All right. What I'm going to do is I'll call a name and I'm going to call who's on deck. If you're on deck, maybe you can kind of make your way towards the microphone there and we'll keep the pace going. Okay? We're going to start off with Julie, followed by La Chelle.

JULIE: Good afternoon, Superintendent Bean and Members of the Board and audience. My name is Julie Colombero and I am the assistant director of operations focused on family relations for California Online Public Schools. My school is a high quality, highly accountable, tuition-free online charter school serving students in grades TK through 12, and has been serving students for 21 years. I just wanted to come today to thank the department of education for its support for schools such as mine, which supports a very niche group of students. I know that I have long been a strong advocate of traditional public schooling, but understand that the two can coexist. There is a need for schools such as mine and others, and I really appreciate your open-mindedness to support the unique schooling options that are out there. And that's all. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay. La Chelle will be followed by Liliann.

LA CHELLE: Good afternoon. Madam President, Dr. Bean, Members of the Board and members of the public. My name's La Chelle Carter and I'm the director of finance at California Online Public Schools, a charter school in San Juan Capistrano, authorized, excuse me, by Capistrano Unified School District. We opened our doors in the fall of 2004, so we've been around 20 plus years. Today, we have an enrollment of 4,877 students. I simply stand here before you to give you sincere thanks and gratitude for what we at Cal OPS like to consider a partnership between charters like ourselves and the Orange County Department of Education. A partnership that recognizes value and education of choice holds educators and education institutions at its highest standards and overall puts children first. Cal OPS has been in a season of transition for the last couple of years, and in the midst of our transition, we face new obstacles. And so as we underwent new HR, IT, finance, a complete overhaul, we got faced with the federal program's monitoring audit.

HENDRICK: I'm sorry, your time is up.

LA CHELLE: Thank you. We'd like to thank Ms. Diane Early for her support.

SHAW: Liliann, followed by Sandy.

LILIANN: Good evening, Dr. Bean, President and Members of the Board. On behalf of our team, I would like to formally extend our sincere appreciation for your continued diligence, thoughtful oversight, and steadfast support of Orange County Workforce Innovation High School. Your commitment to strong governance and accountability is instrumental in ensuring that students have access to high quality educational opportunities, particularly those who benefit for flexible and personalized learning environments. We are truly grateful for your leadership, your partnership, and your enduring commitment to advancing student-centered education throughout Orange County. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Sandy, followed by Kim.

SANDY: Good evening, President and Members of the Board. I want to take a moment to express sincere appreciation for our continued diligence, oversight, and support for Orange County Workforce Innovation High School. We appreciate that most board members have taken the time to tour our school and speak with students and staff. We see your commitment to this work in the meetings, public events, and when you interact with our students and staff during tours. Your thoughtful governance and commitment to accountability ensure that students have access to high quality, flexible education opportunities that truly meet their needs. We are grateful for your leadership and for the care you bring to your role in supporting innovation programs that serve students and families across Orange County. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Kim, followed by Teren.

KIM: Good evening, community members and those tasked with state audit 2026-106. First, I want to commend the county board and its staff for leading schools without prejudice. My children attend Orange County Classical Academy, a charter approved by the county board in 2022, and it has been a fantastic experience, especially for one of my children who falls into the protected student population category. I would not switch choices for the world. I'm going to skip ahead. I'll email you my full speech. OCCA currently has 860 students. It's expecting and has enrolled 943 for the coming school year. There are 1,100 students on the wait list. That is a wait list for every grade the school offers. It's a special place. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Yeah. A minute does go fast. Teren, followed by, forgive me, Sagui.

TEREN: Good evening, trustees and Superintendent Bean. My name is Teren Shafer and I have the privilege of serving as CEO of Orange County School of the Arts, one of the top performing public charter schools in the nation. Our school serves more than 2,400 students here and another 1,300 students in Los Angeles County. For many years, OCSA was authorized through the Santa Ana Unified School District. Power and greed ended that relationship when our authorizer demanded \$20 million of public dollars to cover their mismanagement. This resulted in us both wasting millions on legal fees. It was the leadership of this board and this county department of education that literally saved OCSA. In partnership with OCDE, OCSA has thrived. You

prioritize accountability, strong management, and high quality, and this means creating a space in the educational landscape for excellent charter schools. Thank you for the work that you do for our community and for our students. We appreciate you immensely.

SHAW: Thank you. Thank you. Sagui, followed by Maritza, I think.

SAGUI: Good evening, Board President Barke, Trustees and Superintendent Bean. My name is Dr. Sagui Doering, and I serve as the director of compliance and operations at California Republic Leadership Academy or CRLA. This fall, we will be serving 750 students across three campuses with a wait list of 516 students. This demand clearly reflects what families are seeking. A stronger, higher standard of public education. As a public charter school receiving taxpayer dollars, CRLA adheres to all federal and state regulations and undergoes the same rigorous oversight process that all public schools do. The OCDE, especially the charter unit, exemplifies how to pair oversight with meaningful support. And for CRLA, they thoroughly review every aspect of our schools. I also want to recognize Dr. Bean for expanding access, strengthening systems, and for ensuring that charter school leaders have a voice in the broader educational landscape. We are grateful. I see that my time is pretty much up, so on behalf of CRLA, we thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. All right. I think it's Maritza followed by Sharon.

MARITZA: Maritza.

SHAW: Sorry. Maritza.

MARITZA: Dear Board President Barke, Trustees and Superintendent Bean. My name is Dr. Maritza Ramirez Nieto, and I'm the director of policy and authorizers with Ednovate Charter Schools, serving students and families across Southern California. I want to thank the board and the greater OCDE team for your leadership and commitment. From our experience, Orange County's authorizing practices hold schools accountable, elevate Ednovate schools, and drive strong student outcomes like those we have achieved. This level of thoughtful practices has been supported to our successes and strengthen our partnership with OCDE. As a public charter school, we are held to high standards while also given the flexibility to Ednovate, to meet the needs of our communities. That balance has been critical to our success. We serve a student population that is 99% Black and Latino. Today, 100% of our graduates are accepted to four-year colleges and 93% meet UC admission requirements, outperforming county and statewide averages.

These outcomes reflect not only the hard work of our students and staff, but also the strength of authorizing systems in place. On behalf of our students and families, we thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Sharon, followed by Patricia.

SHARON: My name is Sharon MacDougall and I'm here to defend the Orange County Board of Education. This board advocates for its constituents, exercises independent judgment, and is willing to take principled stands. Not an easy path, but the righteous one. When legislation AB 1955 raised concerns about First Amendment rights between educators and parents, this board

took action. They boldly chose to stand for transparency and parental rights and joined Chino Valley Unified School District's lawsuit against Newsom. Umberg's \$500,000 taxpayer funded board unfocused audit with no evidence of misconduct raises serious concerns about his motives. The proposed audit, in my view, is less about uncovering wrongdoing and more about scrutinizing a board whose policy positions differ from Sacramento's. The risks becoming a political witch hunt rather than a genuine oversight effort. In closing, please recognize the track record of this board. Transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the families they serve. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Patricia, followed by Bill.

PATRICIA: Okay. Hello, my name is Patricia DeVoe, and I'm here today to simply say thank you. Thank you to all the board members for supporting charter schools. You have opened doors to innovative learning environments that prioritize academic excellence, personalized instruction, and creative approaches. One size does not fit all when it comes to how children learn best, and your willingness as a board to support these options have empowered parents. I was born and raised in Orange County and attended excellent public schools. Here and now as a parent, I'm grateful to have even more educational options for my children because of the growth of public charter schools. My two children are enrolled in two different public charters, each best suited for their own educational needs and interests. By giving our family and others more educational choices, you have truly given hope and encouragement to many families who initially felt they had few options. And because of this, even considered moving counties out of state to find better opportunities. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Bill, followed by Anthony. Nope. Not Kapil. Bill. Sorry. Bill. Bill. You, Bill. Sorry about that.

BILL: Good evening, board members. My name is Bill Masters. Thank you very much for seeing me, Dr. Bean. I'm seeing this audit that they're talking about. Okay. This is a witch hunt. Okay. All they do is they do reflecting. When they are doing bad in the state of Sacramento, what they do is they manipulate the people to go a different direction, to think the way they do. We are not going to think the way they do. This is an audit. The money, a half a million dollars. Can you imagine what a half a million dollars would do to the schools and supplies and things like that? This is nothing but a Newsom scam. Just like the Pacific Palisades, the fires, and people can't build houses now. They're not allowing them to get permits. Why? Because they want to put affordable housing in there. Along the beach, who could afford affordable housing on the beach, except Joe Biden, and he spent most of his time on the beach.

SHAW: Oh, boy.

ANTHONY: I got to follow that. Tough one.

SHAW: Anthony will be followed by Kapil.

ANTHONY: Dear Board President Barke, Trustee, Superintendent Bean, my name is Anthony Saba, and I've had privilege of serving as executive director of Samueli Academy in Santa Ana, a charter school you approved back in 2012. I want to express my sincere gratitude to this board

and to the OCDE staff for your leadership, your transparency, and your guidance. Your commitment to thoughtful oversight does not go unnoticed. Thanks to our partnership, Samueli Academy has experienced tremendous success in 14 years. We have a 99% graduation rate. 92% of our kids go on to college, 85% persist, which is more than twice the national average. We've been recipients of multiple awards, including recognized as a California Gold-Driven School and Orange County Impact School, recognized as a top school in the country for the last eight years in a row by the US News and World Report, and more recently been named as a California distinguished school.

These accolades are not possible without the vision and continued support of this board and this staff. On behalf of 800 plus students, families, and teachers, thank you for your leadership transparency and ongoing commitment to serve students and families across Orange County.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay. Kapil, you're up followed by Dawn.

KAPIL: Dear Board President Barke, Trustees and Superintendent Bean, good evening. My name is Dr. Kapil Mathur, and I'm the founder and executive director of the Orange County Academy of Sciences and Arts, esteemed focused public charter school network serving students across Orange County. Our students are not just achieving, they're accelerating. On the most recent California School Dashboard, we were rated accelerated growth in both ELA and math. One in five of our students are students with disabilities. Students who many assume can't reach these levels, but they're thriving alongside their peers. OCASA is a public school. When the society at large talks about strengthening the public school system, charter schools must be a part of that conversation. Education Code section 47605 indicates it's the intent of the legislature that charter schools are and should become part. Thank you for all of you.

SHAW: Okay. Thank you. Dawn, followed by Rudi.

DAWN: Good evening, Dr. Bean and Trustees. I'm speaking on behalf of my friend Lori Kahler, who could not be here tonight due to illness. "As an educator with a master's degree in education, a bachelor's degree in psychology and 40 years of teaching experience, I care very deeply about the academic success and emotional wellbeing of students. I have attended most of Orange County Board of Ed meetings for the last 13 years, and it is clear that this board is also greatly concerned for the academic success and emotional welfare of students. The board does a thorough review before approving any charter school. Time and again, I have heard moving testimonies from students themselves and parents on behalf of their children sharing how finding an alternative educational setting they were struggling academically, physically, mentally, or emotionally, but now they are excelling and thriving. It's great to hear from the young ones who are excited about their school and share their love of learning.

Frequently, there is standing room only in the boardroom as it is packed out with happy families." Thank you very much.

SHAW: Thank you. Rudi, followed by Linda.

RUDI: Hi, Rudi Krause. You guys are delusional if you think that we can coexist with Islam, that we can coexist with the Muslims. We cannot. They will take over our country. They're in the

process of doing now. With the political caliphate, i.e., Mandami in New York. He doesn't represent his constituents.

SHAW: Hey, Rudi, excuse me. You have to address the board and it's about something to do with education.

RUDI: This has to do with education because you people are involved in education and spreading Islam and teaching that we're compatible with them. As your superintendent said, equity. Equity and equal is not the same. Muslims don't think that they're equal to us. They think that they are superior to us. This is Islam supremacy. They want right there. In God we trust, they want in Allah we trust. I'm here to talk.

SHAW: Okay.

RUDI: I should get 20 seconds back for when you interrupted me with your postdoc fallacy. Why don't you give me 20 more seconds?

SHAW: Go ahead, Rudi. 20 seconds.

RUDI: The answer to the Islam program, Islam takeover. We set up congressional hearings for the Muslim ideology trials where what they think as documented in the Quran will be discussed in Congress with their Imans and they will have to admit, convert or die. That's homicidal ideations in the diagnostic statistics manual for mental disorders. Homicidal people cannot be allowed in positions of authority in government over us.

HENDRICK: I'm sorry, sir. Your time is now up.

SHAW: All right. Linda's followed by Zoila.

LINDA: Let's say this is an open letter to Senator Tom Umberg. Senator Umberg, the actions of this board are an open book. All one needs to do is attend the meetings of the OCBE. I've attended most over the last 15 years, and in the last five years, which is the timeframe of this investigation, I have witnessed over 50 charter school public hearings. This is not a rubber stamp process. Each charter application comes with a thick notebook, and then the grilling begins. I do not understand, Senator Umberg, what the problem is with this board. They are simply doing the job that they have been elected to do. And in the past five years, the timeframe of this investigation, all board members, every single one have been elected and often reelected all by wide margins. Senator Umberg, is this an effort to save democracy by removing the voting process from the public and putting the appointment of this board into faceless bureaucrats? Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Zoila, followed by Karen.

ZOILA: Good evening, board members. My name is Zoila. I am a parent of three current students. So, I came a little bit a few months ago to speak on behalf of Vista Condor Global Academy. I don't know if you remember. I talked about, I'm getting choked up again. I talked

about my 10-year-old who came into Vista in kindergarten being nonverbal autism and ADHD, and he's doing great. I know I have limited time, but I just want you to know that I am one of those parents that shows up to every meeting. I'm super involved in the school. I've talked to the superintendent when he was back when he was a principal and every step of the way, he's always keeping the parents informed and he gives us as much details as he can. There's a reason why we left the Santa Ana Unified School District.

It was just not homey enough. It's just that they didn't have that courtesy to just stop and just talk to the parents when we left. So, I really appreciate you giving that opportunity to find Vista and my family thanks you for that.

SHAW: Thank you. Karen, followed by Alyssa.

KAREN: Good evening. I want to begin by thanking this Board of Education for its continued service to our community. At a time when education is too often pulled into political crosscurrents, you have remained focused on what matters most. Our students, our families, and the quality of education in this country. That consistency, that discipline, and that clarity of purpose are both rare and deeply appreciated. This board has also done something equally important. You have created a space for diverse communities to be seen and heard. Time and again, we see students and families come before this board, sharing their stories, their achievements, their aspirations, showcasing children in this way is not symbolic. It reflects a real commitment to student-centered leadership and reminds all of us why this work matters. The recent actions coming out of Sacramento, particularly the proposed audit, raised serious concerns, not just about process, but about precedent. Oversight is important, but it must be fair, objective, and free from political motivation, unlike what's going on in Sacramento. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Alyssa, followed by Katie.

ALYSSA: Good evening. Most of what I wrote down and planned on saying everybody has said. So, I'm going to take this moment to introduce myself. I'm Alyssa Ross. I serve as the director of community schools and growth for Vista Charter Public Schools. We have over 1,200 kids here in Orange County. And I want to take a moment to share a story that reflects the impact of our work that what we do at our charter school. So recently, a father came to pick up his son. He's got a fifth grader and a ninth grader, and he said, "I have to take my boy early because we've got to go find somewhere to live. If we're getting evicted from our mobile home, there's no water and they won't let us use the bathroom there. But if we don't find anywhere, we're going to sleep on the streets tonight." So immediately our team rallied together and within the same day, we found that family a place to live.

So, this speaks to the importance of our work as charter schools. And I just wanted to say thank you just like everyone in this room has said to you guys for your oversight and your continued support of our school. So, on behalf of Vista, thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Katie, followed by Alexis.

KATIE: Hello. My name is Katie Walker and I'm the student services coordinator at Suncoast Prep. I'm here today to express my strong support for the Orange County Board of Education and

its commitment to expanding high quality charter school options for families. Charter schools play a critical role in meeting diverse student needs, especially those who may not thrive in traditional settings. They offer flexibility, innovation, and individualized approaches that empower students to succeed academically and personally. For many families, charter schools are not just an alternative, they are a lifeline. OCBE has demonstrated thoughtful leadership in ensuring that charter petitions are reviewed with rigor, fairness, and a focus on student outcomes. Supporting charter schools means supporting parent choice, educational equity, and opportunities for students to reach their full potential. I encourage the board to continue approving and supporting strong charter petitions that prioritize student success, accountability, and innovation. Our communities are stronger when families have access to educational options that truly meet their children's needs. Thank you for your time and dedication to the students and families at Orange County.

SHAW: Thank you. Alexis followed by Paige.

ALEXIS: Hi, I'm Alexis and this is Joanna and this is her second OCDE hearing. Thank you to the board for taking the time to hear Suncoast position today. As a staff member, I've truly valued being a part of this community and witnessing firsthand the positive, life-changing, impacting homeschooling through Suncoast has had on so many families. I also want to highlight Suncoast respects family's legal right to choose whether or not to participate in statewide testing. Our charter does not supersede those parental rights and it supports them by providing flexibility and options that respect each family's educational decisions. Thank you for considering the voices and rights of the families we serve.

SHAW: Thank you. Paige will be followed by Ronna, maybe. Ronna, sorry. Okay.

PAIGE: Good evening. My name is Paige McKinney. I'm a Suncoast staff member, and I want to speak up to say that I believe the Orange County Board of Education deserves support and respect for the work they've consistently done on behalf of families. This board has created space for real educational choice. You've listened to parents and you've made decisions that reflect the actual needs of the communities you represent, not a one size fits all system. That is exactly what a board of education should do. Please continue standing strong in your commitment to our families. You have my support. Thank you for your time and dedication.

SHAW: Thank you. Ronna, followed by Jason.

RONNA: Good evening. My name is Ronna Yelin and I'm a parent of a thriving graduated student of a homeschool charter and an advocate for homeschool families and charter schools. I just want to take a moment to thank the Orange County Board of Education for the way you show up for families like mine. You listen, you engage, and you truly represent the diverse needs of the community you serve, communities. Not every child fits into a one size fits all model of education. Because of your leadership, families have access to options that actually work for their children academically, emotionally, and personally. That matters more than I can fully express. I know the work you do isn't always easy, and lately, it feels like that work is being unfairly criticized. But from where I stand as a parent, I see a board that is responsive,

thoughtful, and committed to doing what's right for families and students. Please note that many of us see your efforts. We appreciate them and we support you. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Jason, followed by Gretchen.

JASON: Good evening. My name is Jason Watts, executive director of Scholarship Prep Charter Schools. I want to begin with a simple point. Facts matter more than conjecture. There is a narrative being pushed that county authorized charter schools are not held accountable, that they are loosely monitored and that they selectively serve students. That does not match our experience nor the evidence. At Scholarship Prep, we focus on serving a vulnerable student population. 93% of our students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. 43% of English learners, 23% are students experiencing homelessness. Simply put, we serve the students and families who made an intentional choice to come to us and results matter. In just our second year of operation, Scholarship Prep had the largest math and ELA growth of any public school in Orange County. That brings me to the Orange County role as an authorizer. Amongst our five authorizers, Orange County is in the top two of rigor, thoroughness, and seriousness of oversight. Ultimately, Orange County is strengthening public education by authorizing strong charter schools and by insisting on both accountability and success. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Gretchen, followed by Bethany.

GRETCHEN: Good evening. My name is Gretchen Bozanich, and I'm a Suncoast staff member and here to support a community of families here in Orange County who deeply value educational choice. What stands out about the Orange County Board of Education is that you actually listen to us. You take the time to understand what families need and you support programs that reflect those needs. That kind of leadership creates opportunities for students who might otherwise be left behind in a traditional system. We need more of that, not less. I know the work you're doing hasn't been easy, and I just want to say clearly, many of us see it and we appreciate it and we support you. Please keep going. Our families are counting on it. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Last but not least, Bethany.

BETHANY: I'll be quick as last. I'm here as a parent of two children in Orange County, and I just want to thank you for the way that you serve families and build community. You take time to really listen and engage transparently, and that makes a really meaningful difference. Because of your leadership, families like mine have access to educational options that support our children. And I know the work you do can be challenging at times and definitely criticized, but from my perspective, you're responsive and thoughtful and focused on what's best for all students. Please know that your efforts are always seen and greatly appreciated. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Madam President, that concludes public comments for this period, but where did Jason go? We don't normally respond back to public comments, but he said we were number two, I think, to somebody. So, I got to find out from him who's number one, but maybe after the meeting.

BARKE: All right. Well, thank you to everyone for their public comment. We really appreciate those of you that came out and took the time to public comment. Sorry we cut you to a minute. I know sometimes it's hard when you plan for three and you cut it to a minute, but most of you did fantastic. Thank you for that. All right. So next we will move on to, let's see. We call on Stacy?

HENDRICK: Trish Walsh.

BARKE: Oh, okay. Okay. Trish.

WALSH: Hello. Good evening, Board of Trustees, President Barke, Superintendent Bean. Thank you for having us tonight. I'm Trish Walsh. I'm the director of academic content and instructional support here at OCDE, and it's my privilege to be here tonight to introduce Marleena Barber. So, Marleena is one of our arts, well, she is our arts and disability consultant here at OCDE, and she works very closely with Scott Fitzpatrick, our arts coordinator at OCDE. And she is here tonight to tell you about Orange County Arts and Disabilities, a 50th anniversary of the festival that we have been running for many, many years here at OCDE. So, we'd just like to thank you for your attention to this really important event. It's a great community event that you'll hear more about. I'm pleased to also serve on her board, and we have our board members here this evening to celebrate with us. So, without further ado, I'll turn it over to Marleena.

BARBER: Good evening, Members of the Board, Superintendent Bean and OCDE leadership here today. My name is Marleena Barber, and as Trish said, I am the executive director of Orange County Arts and Disability and also an arts and disability consultant here at OCDE. And I'm thrilled to be here this evening to share with you about the Orange County Arts and Disability Festival, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, our golden anniversary. So just to give you a quick background, the Arts and Disability Festival began in 1976 through a grant to start a new program here at OCDE designed to support students with disabilities in the arts. This was a national program pioneered by Jean Kennedy-Smith and was implemented in almost every state with a festival model to celebrate artists with disabilities. In 1982, a nonprofit was founded through OCDE to help support the festival and provide additional programming to schools and the community.

As you can see, the national program underwent a few name changes, and in 2019, the national network basically dissolved, which prompted our most recent name change to our program, which is now called Orange County Arts and Disability. We are very proud that Orange County is one of the few sites left in the country to produce a festival, and that had originated out of that initial program. So why a festival for students with disabilities, and why are the arts so important for these students? Well, we have about 13% of our student population here in Orange County that receive special education services, and the arts provide something uniquely powerful, a space for expression, communication, and inclusion. And this is especially important for our students with disabilities. And in the mid-1970s, when this festival was first introduced, there weren't too many opportunities for students with disabilities to be seen and heard.

So, the mission of the festival is to provide opportunity for artists with disabilities to share their talents, education, not just arts education, but educating the greater community about disability and awareness of the amazing things that people with disabilities do, and also to break societal stereotypes and perceptions of people with disabilities. The first festival was held outdoors at

Santa Ana College and jumped around to various locations before it landed at Main Place Mall, which has been its home for the last 38 years. The festival is a daylong celebration that includes a countywide art exhibit of artwork by students with disabilities from our schools, but also adult artists in our community. And we also have a wonderful partnership with the Festival of Arts Laguna Beach and Bowers Museum for additional opportunities to share and display artwork by students with disabilities. And then this is a list of all of our participating districts and also community organizations that submit artwork to be shown at the festival, and we do show every single piece.

We have performances running all day long at our festival, everything from hip hop, dance, to Folklorico, classical piano, to taiko drumming, all performers with disabilities. And we have an ASL interpreter and MC present for the entire day. And we've been very lucky to have had Dani Bowman from the Netflix hit show, *Love on the Spectrum* as our MC the last couple of years. During the festival, there is also a resource fair with over 20 disability organizations that provide services and support to children and families, and here is all of our community partners that exhibit at the festival.

Also, during the festival, we have arts workshops by some of our Orange County's most prestigious art museums like Laguna Art Museum and Bowers. And then we also have workshops led by artists with disabilities as well. There are so many wonderful stories that come out of the festival. One of the most heartwarming is witnessing parents discovering that their children can sing or dance, paint, or draw. So often these families are told over and over again what their children can't do, and this festival shows them what they can do. One of our performers, Taylor Cox, had her first piano performance out on our festival stage at the age of four years old. We have watched her grow up as she's returned each year and is now a college student attending Biola University, studying music therapy. And her mother is actually here this evening, Kim Cox. She's one of our board members, a proud mom, I'm sure.

And finally, I want to leave you with my own personal story as it relates to the festival. I am legally blind from a genetic condition called albinism, and I'm also a vocalist, and I performed at this festival when I was 25 years old. I went on to become a music educator and a choir director at the Braille Institute, where I then brought my choir of blind and low vision students to perform at this festival for many years. I served on the committee as a volunteer here at OCDE to help plan the festival, and now I find myself in this very surreal, full circle moment as a coordinator of this event, bringing it into its 50th year. I am so grateful to my predecessor, Phyllis Berenbeim, who is also here this evening for giving me the opportunity to continue, yes give her her applause for sure.

I'm so grateful to her for giving me the opportunity to continue the legacy of this festival that has meant so much to me. And I'd also like to recognize the Orange County Arts and Disability Board members of the nonprofit who are also here this evening, for they do a lot of work and support me in the planning of this festival. So, we invite you to join us on Saturday, April 25th at Main Place Mall. We have opening ceremonies at 11:00 AM, and then we have workshops and performances running from 12:00 to 4:00 PM. We also brought you a little gift, which Trish will give to you. This is a little magnet, and it has the date of the festival, so you could put it on your fridge and remember if you'd like to stop by. We have a theme every year, and the theme this year was Shine On, and this artwork was the winning artwork for our theme. It is by a

kindergartner from Fountain Valley School District, and it was titled Sun. So, we hope you enjoy that. And thank you so much again for having us here today.

BARKE: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation and sharing your amazing journey. And now I would like to call for a motion to adopt the proclamation for the Orange County Arts and Disability Organization celebrating their 50th anniversary.

WILLIAMS: Make a motion.

BARKE: I have a motion.

VALDES: Second.

BARKE: And a second. All those in favor?

SHAW: Do we need to do a roll because of Lisa?

HENDRICK: We do.

BARKE: Okay. I'll, yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Wonderful. It passes 5-0. And thank you for these lovely gifts. And Lisa, I'm sure we'll save one for you because they're beautiful. Can we do for a photo now? Okay. Would you guys like to join in the photo?

WILLIAMS: Marleena, will you please introduce your board? Tell us who they are.

BARBER: Sure. I'm going to introduce the board members. We have Julie Han, who is our board chair, Phyllis Berenbeim, our chair emeritus, Carrie McNeely, our secretary, Mariana Kovacs, Gail Ann Harmeyer, Kim Cox. Maylene Richardson and Joey Hernandez and Scott Fitzpatrick and Trish Walsh. Thank you so much.

BARKE: Thank you again for the lovely presentation and the gifts.

WILLIAMS: And can I make an outreach to our dear friend of the sport, Phyllis Berenbeim? She has been around since when? 1990s?

PHYLLIS: 1977.

WILLIAMS: 1977. Oh my God. Okay. And you retired how long ago?

PHYLLIS: First time in 2000 and then I was part-time for 19 more years.

WILLIAMS: You loved us that much. Thank you, Phyllis, for your dedication to this Department and all the years you put here. I remember you fondly for the grace and character and charity that you spread to everyone around you.

BARKE: Okay. Well, next I'd like to move on to item six and I'd like to invite Sergeant Leora Adrian to the podium. Do you want to introduce this item, Mr. Valdes?

VALDES: Yes. So, I actually participated in a career day at my children's charter school in Santa Ana. I'd say it was about a month ago. And I spent the better part of the morning talking to kids about careers in education, potentially at the Department. And thanks to my wife who insisted that I bring ice cream popsicles, my table was very well received. I was 20 or 30 deep at some point with kids very interested in talking to me. And the table next to me was at the table next to me was Sergeant Adrian Loera with several other military personnel and they were doing their own presentations. And we got to talking at some point middle of the morning and he started to tell me what the Cal Guard Drug Demand Reduction and Outreach his organization does. And I said, "I'd like to invite you down to a meeting for you to tell the residents of Orange County how you benefit kids in Orange County." So that's the background on this. And with that, I'm going to yield the floor to Sergeant Loera.

SEARGEANT LOERA: Thank you. Good evening. I would actually like to introduce my project manager for the Los Angeles Drug Demand Reduction, Sergeant First Class Lopez.

SERGEANT LOPEZ: Good evening, Superintendent. Good evening, Board. Thank you very much for the invitation. This really is a full circle moment for me. I'm a product of Orange County. I grew up in Santa Ana the majority of my life. So, this really is really an opportunity to pay it forward. I grew up in not the best of environments if it had not been for a mentor that sponsored me through Rotary in Santa Ana. I don't think I would be at the level of not just education, but professionalism had it not been for her. So, thank you for the opportunity. But ultimately, yes, we're here with the Drug Demand Reduction Outreach Program. We're actually a department within the California National Guard that actually serves a larger purpose to work

with supporting law enforcement agencies. And our main focus is to counter any type of narcotics through assistance, helping serve any type of seizure, warrants, et cetera.

We support law enforcement agencies at every level, local, state, and federal, but my group specifically focuses on the prevention piece. So, we go out to the community, we work with various schools, different community organizations, and our main focus is ultimately to do drug prevention and really try to empower youth as much as possible. So, our mission statement is we train at-risk youth how to navigate the negative influences that lead to the behavior that results in negative consequences. And ultimately the way that we do that is we really try to focus on drug prevention at a multi-level process. We understand that the most difficult thing is utilizing or ultimately allowing yourself to utilize drugs or doing something illicit for the first time. So, our main focus is really to postpone the age at which a young person either introduces drugs into their system for the first time or expands their utilization overall.

The main reason why we focus on this so much is the statistics alone, right? 90% of Americans who meet the clinical criteria for addiction started using substances before the age of 18. One in four Americans who began using substances before the age of 18, as compared to one in 25 who began at 21 or older. So, we're looking at a huge disparity when it comes to percentages. So that's why we focus so much on that first time onset of drug use. And the way we do that is we address certain behaviors as well as mental resiliency with our students that ultimately encompass and focus on creating protective factors all around them. Again, we partner with law enforcement. We have presentations from kindergarten all the way up through 12th grade, along with presentations for parents as well that not only go over the current drug environment, but also go into the social media aspect of it.

We will walk parents step by step on how that social media aspect is utilized to obtain illicit narcotics and ultimately create an additional protective factor so that the parents know how to monitor social media usage accurately and more effectively. We work in a tiered model just like any other type of prevention system within the school, and we really adapt ourselves to whatever the school is trying to do, whether it's a tier one, tier two, or a tier three approach. We currently work with schools throughout Orange County, specifically under Orange County Board of Education with OC ACCESS. We've been very successful for the last four years working with Sunburst Youth Academy. We've also worked with Job Challenge and also with El Sol, which is where we met Trustee Valdes at.

Our main focuses and main curriculums that we utilize is operation prevention and positive action. Although operation prevention focuses mostly on the perceived susceptibility as well as the severity, it still drives actions along with positive action and with positive action being more of a social emotional curriculum, it focuses more on the perceived benefits and the perceived barriers, but at the end of the day, they still drive actions. These are the additional components that we do offer. One thing that I did not mention is that all of our services are cost-free, to include workbooks as well as manpower. I have 16 individuals that cover a large territory, which goes as far south as San Clemente and as far north as San Luis Obispo. We've worked with over 227 schools throughout those different counties in the last year, and I have very passionate team members who really do want to focus on empowering our community as much as possible. We would love the support of the Orange County Board of Education to get our program out and be able to expand on the success that we've created with key identifying schools, and ultimately

allow our program to be able to reach more youth and empower them as well. Thank you very much.

BARKE: Thank you. Appreciate your presentation and appreciate the work you do in our community.

SERGEANT LOPEZ: Thank you.

BARKE: Any questions?

WILLIAMS: I have something to mention. I'd like to say something. Just real quick before you gentlemen go. On behalf of many of the families, and especially those of us up here, we so appreciate your service to our country and the sacrifices that you have given to us. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you for those comments, Ken. Okay. Next, we are moving to the consent calendar, and I would like to pull number 12 since I am mentioned. That way I can recuse myself from number 12. So, may I have a motion for the consent calendar excluding item 12, if that's agreeable to everyone?

WILLIAMS: I'll make the motion for consent calendar.

VALDES: Second.

BARKE: Okay. All right. Roll call.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

SHAW: Okay. So, I suppose I'll take number 12 then?

BARKE: Yes, please. Thank you.

SHAW: All right. So as the acting vice president, do I hear a motion for item number 12?

WILLIAMS: I'll make a motion.

VALDES: Second.

SHAW: Okay. It's been moved by Trustee Williams. Seconded by Trustee Valdes. Roll call, please.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: I'll abstain.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Okay. So next is charter schools. Do we have any submissions?

HENDRICK: We do. We have one submission for California Online Public Schools, Southern California for a countywide charter petition. Their public hearing will be on May 6th with board action on June 3rd. There are those binders in your board chambers, big ones, for you to take home. And so that will be our only one for the next meeting.

BARKE: Okay, great. All right. Next, I'd like to call Aracely to the podium.

CHASTAIN: Good evening, Trustees. President Barke, Superintendent Bean today, the board will hold a public hearing to consider the countywide charter petition submitted by Suncoast Preparatory Academy to establish Suncoast Charter School. The proposed Suncoast Charter School would be a countywide non-classroom based program serving students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12, beginning in the '26-'27 school year. The petition identifies a distinct pupil population, families who intentionally select a homeschool instructional model supported by credentialed teachers, individualized learning plans and flexible pacing. Enrollment

data indicate that the students are geographically dispersed across multiple school districts and participation is driven by program design rather than district of residents. Based on the record presented, staff find that the proposed educational program serves a defined people population that would benefit from these services and that this population cannot be served as well through a single district charter school. Accordingly, staff find that the petition meets the threshold requirements for a countywide charter school under Education Code section 47605.6.

The petition has been reviewed in accordance with applicable provisions of the California Education Code. You've been provided with the Orange County Department of Education staff report, which summarizes findings from that review and presents staff's recommendations for the board's consideration. Following a comprehensive review of the petition, including a clarification meeting held with the petitioners on February 19th of '26, staff recommended the board approve the petition with conditions. As part of the review, staff also evaluated the petition for completeness and alignment with statutory requirements, as well as the performance of the operator's existing program. Staff identified areas where additional specificity and clarity will further strengthen the petition, particularly with respect to measurable student outcomes and reporting metrics aligned to the state priorities. In addition, statewide assessment data from the existing program reflect both areas of both growth and opportunity, including continued progress in assessment participation and subgroup performance.

If approved, staff recommend that these areas be addressed through conditions incorporated into the charter agreement. These conditions are intended to establish clear expectations, support ongoing program development, and ensure alignment with state accountability requirements. They include the development of a plan to achieve and maintain strong participation in statewide assessments, the establishment of baseline data and annual performance targets in English language arts and mathematics, and the inclusion of additional measurable goals and reporting metrics related to college readiness and pupil engagement indicators. These provisions are designed to support transparency, consistency, and continuous improvement over the term of the charter. Based on the findings and conditions outlined in the staff report, OCDE staff recommended the board approve the Suncoast Charter School petition with conditions for a term of three, four, or five years and prove on agreement defining the operational relationship with the parties. Prior to board action, charter school representatives are allotted equal time and opportunity or 10 minutes, whichever is longer, to provide evidence and testimony in response to the staff recommendations and findings. I now invite the charter school representatives to the podium.

WINDI: Okay. Do we know how to make that work? Oh, yay. Okay. Good evening. My name is Windi Eklund and I'm honored to be here tonight with our Suncoast community. I'm joined by Bethany Ewers, who will help me share parts of our presentation. Suncoast is a TK through 12 public charter school built to support families who have chosen a homeschool path. We currently serve nearly 2,000 students throughout Orange County and surrounding areas. Our model is rooted in a strong family school partnership where credentialed teachers provide guidance, oversight, and individualized support while students engage in meaningful learning at home, in their communities, and through real life experiences. We are here this evening to request approval of a countywide charter that would allow us to continue serving our growing geographically diverse student population. Before we continue, I'd like to pause and recognize the staff, families, and students who are here with us this evening.

Hi, everyone. If you're part of... At Suncoast, we value families as true partners and actively elevate their voices through ongoing feedback and collaboration. We intentionally seek out family input and use it to inform our program, strengthen our practices, and ensure we are meeting the needs of our students. Thank you all for being here and standing in support of Suncoast. Trustee Valdes, at the last meeting, you asked what a day in the life looks like for our students. Inspired by your question, one of our students alongside his brother, created this short video, especially for you and the other board members. It's a sweet student produced glimpse into his learning experiences, and I hope you enjoy it.

[Video plays]

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT: Something that's hard or sometimes special than stars.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So, what's on your skylight today? So go to your tasks. And what do you have to do today for school?

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT: Pattern Explorer. Neuroarts.com. And typing.com.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Neuroarts.com. Okay. And what chores?

[Video ends]

WINDI: Our families play a central role in their children's education and are well-informed about their rights, including the legal right to opt out of state assessment. At Suncoast, honoring parents' rights is not optional. It is foundational to our program. At the same time, we operate within the state's accountability system, which is built on a 95% participation expectation. When students do not test, the school is penalized even when families are exercising their state given rights. This creates a clear tension between compliance-driven systems and a model grounded in family choice. Bethany will share what our testing growth has looked like over time. Bethany?

BETHANY: Good evening. Over the past three years, as we've continued building trust with families, we've seen our participation increase from 33% to 65% to 75% last year, with continued growth projected to approximately 81% this year. Our growth reflects both relationship building and communication with families, helping them better understand the role of assessment and how it connects to our program. We've made systematic improvements by expanding testing support, targeted preparation, and increasing flexibility to reduce barriers. Families intentionally choose our program because we honor and respect their legal parental rights, including the right to opt out of state assessments. Because we do not condition enrollment on participation, testing rates look different within our model. Our trajectory shows study progress and reflects the time intensive work we are committed to continuing. For students who participated in state testing, our dashboard shows subgroups gains ranging from approximately 50 to 175 points, well above typical year over year growth, which is generally zero to 10 points on this dashboard metric.

This indicates that when our students participate, they make meaningful academic progress, and we're seeing this growth across all student subgroups, particularly among Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. It also reflects the ongoing shift in the assessment

culture within our program, one built on trust, familiarity, and increasing engagement consistently over time. We recognize that the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards does not always fully reflect student ability, particularly in a model like ours that focuses on the development of the whole child, but we are encouraged by the majority of our students demonstrating that year-over-year improvement. As participation has increased, more students have engaged in state testing for the first time after historically opting out. We're also seeing a broader range of testing behaviors, including students who are participating to support the school, but may not yet be fully engaged in the assessment itself. This impacts overall performance outcomes, and in response, we've strengthened our processes because of the flexibility of our program, we can quickly adjust support with guidance from our education specialists.

We continue to improve our distance from standard even with participation penalties applied. Under the state's current charter school accountability system schools that remain in the same performance band for two years are reclassified into a lower tier. As a result, we moved from mid-level to low performance despite our continued student growth. We did not move into the lowest indicator level. Instead, we maintained and improved our distance from standard despite our challenges and showing our continued student growth. We feel that we are on a stable, positive academic trajectory. This progress has not been driven by mandates or enrollment requirements, but by building trust with our families.

In response to the additional conditions outlined in the report, we want to take a moment to provide context on how these areas are already addressed in our practices and how they will continue to be monitored and reported over time. We demonstrate strong engagement outcomes with attendants at 99%, chronic absenteeism at 0% and middle school dropout rates near 0% or at near 0%. Because there are not areas of concern, they're not identified as focus areas within our LCAP. However, they're consistently monitored through our internal processes, including regular meetings, attendance tracking, and compliance oversight. While we are not currently able to host AP exams due to the lack of a physical site and the structure required for AP implementation, we do monitor outcomes for students who choose to pursue those opportunities independently. To support college and career readiness, we use multiple measures that align with our program design, and while traditional metrics such as AP participation are one pathway, they're not the only indicator of readiness within our model.

Our homeschool students demonstrate readiness through A through G course completion, community college coursework, and individualized academic pathways that emphasize independence, critical thinking, and real-world application. Windi.

WINDI: At Suncoast, continuous improvement is embedded in how we operate every day. We regularly reflect on our data, programs, and practices to ensure we meet the needs of all students. We use multiple sources of information, including assessment, results, family feedback, and staff collaboration to guide our decisions and strengthen our program over time. This work is also reflected in our WASC accreditation, which is an ongoing cycle of self-study and reflection and continuous improvement. Our new school will continue within that accredited framework. Our focus is on refining what is working, responding thoughtfully to areas of need and ensuring that every student is supported in their academic growth. Through our demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement and through the intentional work of building trust with our families, we

have shown meaningful growth in both testing, participation and academic outcomes. We are committed to continuing to strengthen engagement, deepening student learning, and ensuring the progress is clearly visible over time. For these reasons, we respectfully request approval of a five-year charter term with no conditions. Thank you to the OCDE and the Orange County Board of Education for your time, support, and consideration, and for the opportunity to share the voice of our community.

CHASTAIN: The hearing is now open for 15 minutes of public comment. Trustee Shaw, are there any speakers for this item?

SHAW: There are 17. We have 15 minutes for this. Oh, dear. Okay. You don't have to use your full minute. That is a rule. So maybe if two of you could cut it just a little short, we'll try to get everyone through, but let's say a minute and hopefully some of you a little less. I'll call a name and who's on deck. We're going to start off with Gloria, followed by Nikolai. Okay.

GLORIA: Hi, guys. All right. My name's Gloria Vanwormer, and I'm a parent of three students at Suncoast Charter School. We're here today to ask you to approve Suncoast county-wide charter. Suncoast is a school that truly understands that children are not a one size fit all. I understand the concerns about state testing, participation, and scores, but I respectfully ask you to consider the bigger picture that not all students learn the same way, and not all students demonstrate their knowledge best through standardized tests, especially online ones. At Suncoast, students have the opportunity to have hands-on project-based learning with limited screen time. They are building critical thinking skills, creativity, and genuine love for learning. Naturally, they may not perform as strongly on test design for students who spend significant time preparing specifically for those formats. I personally watched my children take a practice test and struggle, not because they didn't understand the material, but because they was unfamiliar. They knew the answers, but the semantics got in the way. It reflects a mismatch on how learning is being measured. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Nikolai followed by Girgitta.

NIKOLAI: Okay. All right. Hello. Hello. My name is Nikolai and I wanted to share how amazing Suncoast is. Every child's mind is different and not everyone learns the same. Some schools feel very focused on pushing students through the system, but Suncoast is focusing on helping each student succeed in their own way. Before I came to Suncoast, I struggled with writing, taking notes, and school in general. Since being here, I have grown so much and felt more confident in my learning skills. I know there are some concerns about state testing. Sometimes students might get questions wrong, not because they didn't understand the material, but because the questions are worded differently or because we aren't used to taking long computer tests. This can make it hard to show whether we really know. Suncoast has helped me in ways that other schools didn't. It supported students, helped them catch up if they fall behind and truly helps them grow. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay. Girgitta, followed by Grace.

GIRGITTA: Good evening and President and Members of the Board. I'm here as a homeschool mom of two twins with the Suncoast, so I'm here to support their mission to continue for the next

five years, as well as the board's openness to everything homeschooling and charter schooling. But I am opposed to mandatory testing. I have seven-year-olds, and the standardized testing like cast for homeschool children is overriding parental choice. Imagine two twin children like mine. I have one here and one over there. As you can see, they are different in temperament. Oh, here she is. Raised in the same home. One is a faster runner. The other one is a more graceful dancer. One has a beautiful handwriting. The other one struggles with the writing, but spells effortlessly. One works slowly and carefully through math and the other one solves problems quickly, but less precisely. Which child is, is that it? I'm only halfway through, but thank you.

SHAW: I think we get your point. Grace followed by Stephanie.

GRACE: Good evening, Members of the Board. My name is Grace and I am a sixth-grade student at Suncoast Charter School. I'm here today to ask you, please approve Suncoast County wide charter. Suncoast is an amazing school. It is giving me the chance to learn in ways that work best for me. Not all students learn the same way. I know state testing is important. From my point of view, it can be really frustrating. I'm not used to spending a lot of time on a screen. At Suncoast, my family and I focus on real hands-on learning instead of screen time. So, when I have to take long online tests, it can be hard for me, but a test should not decide how smart someone really is. I think the fact that I'm standing here at 11 years old, speaking in front of adults, shows how much Suncoast has helped me learn skills much more valuable than being able to take an online test. I think every student should have the chance to feel this way. Please give our school the chance to keep helping students like me learn and succeed in the ways to work best for us. Thank you for your time.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay. Let's see. Stephanie followed by, oh, wait. I'm sorry. That was Stephanie followed by Danielle.

STEPHANIE: Good evening. My name is Stephanie Oca and I'm a parent of two students here at Suncoast. We chose Suncoast because it respects something deeply important to our family, the role of parents as primary decision makers in our children's education. That partnership between school and family is not only meaningful, it is essential. In California, parents retain the right to make informed educational decisions for their children, including participation in state assessments as recognized within the education code, and that partnership is something we deeply value. For our family, choosing to opt out of state testing has been a thoughtful and intentional decision. It allows us to maintain a learning environment that supports growth, confidence, and consistency. Without introducing unnecessary pressure that does not reflect our children's progress. Suncoast reflects what is possible when schools and families work in partnership, when parents are trusted, and when student success is viewed through more than a single measure. I recognize the MTSS team and the educational specialists. They have done a lot for us.

SHAW: Thank you. Danielle, followed by Jessica.

DANIELLE: As an education specialist and the assessment coordinator here at Suncoast, I'm proud of the trust we've built with our families. Because of that trust, some families who are hesitant have been willing to let their children at least try CASSPP many times for the first time.

But what I've seen first-hand is that sometimes that participation doesn't always mean that the experience is right for the child. Behind every data point is a student and behind that student is a family making a thoughtful, often difficult decision about what's truly in their child's best interest. A parent shared this letter with us that reflects a reality that numbers alone can't capture, and I'd like to read it now.

“Dear members of the board, I hope you're doing well. I'm writing this as a parent in support of Suncoast. As you approach your decision regarding its charter. As a parent, one of the most important rights I value is the ability to make informed decisions about my child's education, including the legal right to opt out of state testing. We recently participated in the CAA test and it was quite the disaster. My son has special needs. He's autistic and nonverbal. Although...”
You guys do have the letter. We did submit the letter too, so you can read it.

SHAW: That's a good thing to do. Send it to us in writing. Yeah. Jessica, followed by Vicki.

JESSICA: Good evening, everyone. My name is Jessica Munoz, and I'm the mother of three Suncoast students. I came here today to share a bit about our family and why we chose Suncoast Charter School. Our children need more flexibility in how they learn and where they learn. All three previously attended brick and mortar public school. Our children are autistic and had a difficult time learning in a traditional classroom. We chose Suncoast because it offered the ability to teach our children in an environment where they feel safe and are not overstimulated. Two of our children are eligible to participate in statewide testing this school year. Unfortunately, neither of them were able to participate due to their disabilities. Our sixth grader is autistic and diagnosed with anxiety. She has an IEP to help meet her educational needs. She becomes very anxious and overwhelmed while taking formal tests. If she becomes overwhelmed, she can and has eloped, and she does self-harm.

Because our children would be at risk for self-harm and/or elopement, we have made the choice to not participate in state testing. Due to our children's disability, Suncoast will have a lower participation percentage. The law requires public charter schools to maintain a 95% participation rate. Though this isn't current law, it does not make it just. Traditional schools do not have the same arbitrary requirement. They give parents a choice to opt out without fears of school shutting down. We choose Suncoast Charter because they support the school and honor parents right in making the best decisions with their children. Thank you for your time.

SHAW: Thank you. All right. Vicki, followed by Alex.

VICKI: Hi, my name is Vicki McClure. I'm an education specialist with Suncoast. I want to thank the board for your support. I always hear good things about you and I'm grateful. I'm grateful to be at Suncoast and I wanted to share three different scenarios about testing. The first is I have two families that opted out. Most of my families agreed to take it because they want Suncoast to succeed in the eyes of the state. The first thing is the families that opted out, one was because of anxiety and stress, and so the kids just aren't ready. Another, they're extremely advanced academically and they concentrate on the love of learning rather than teaching to a test. So, the second scenario is I tested a student a few weeks ago, fourth grader, who wasn't quite ready to do a writing assignment on her own. So, I'm watching her cry as she takes the ELA performance task and it broke my heart.

But I told her, just keep going, just keep moving on. So, parents are trying. They're like, they're willing to do this and to push on. The third scenario is they took another family took the test last year to participate and the mom said, "Oh yay. I'm glad my daughter's doing great." So, we're trying to get them all to that point. So, thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Alex, followed by Iris.

ALEX: Hello, members. My name is Alex Ferruzca I'm an ES specialist at Suncoast. I'm here to talk about EL students and how that affects the testing. A lot of the EL students that we have, we find out here at Suncoast that the reason why they test not as high is because of not knowledge of the language. That's something that we're trying to address and we're trying to get all the kids to do. Sorry about that. So here at Suncoast, we're trying to get them to understand the questions and everything that comes in the test. And this is coming from somebody who's dyslexic, who has to read things three times before getting it. I understand the struggle with language. It's not only the language that is different, but it's also the word that comes into it that it can actually affect the child testing higher. So, thank you for everything you do. Thank you for supporting EL programs like the GRIP program. And here at Suncoast we are supporting that kind of programs. Thank you.

SHAW: Iris, followed by Sasha. Is there Iris? Iris? Sorry.

IRIS: We've been here since four guys. I'm sorry. Give me a minute. Okay. Oh, good evening, Members of the Board. My name is Iris De La Herran and I'm a parent of two students enrolled in Suncoast Preparatory Academy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I want to share why this school matters so much to my family. Before enrolling in this charter, my child struggled in a traditional classroom setting. They were frequently sent to the principal's office for what was labeled as behavioral issues. But as a parent, I could see something different. My child wasn't being disruptive out of defiance. They were under stimulated and not getting the attention they needed to stay engaged. In a classroom with a student to teach her ratio of 30 to two, it's incredibly difficult for any child who learns differently to get the support they need. My child was falling through those cracks. This charter school changed that. With a more personalized and flexible learning approach, my child is now engaged, supported, and actually excited about learning again. The difference has been night and day, not just academically, but emotionally. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Sasha, followed by Laurel.

SASHA: Hi, Board. Thank you so much. Sorry. Very distracting having a little one. This is not the greatest educational environment for him. But I just wanted to say on the other hand of testing, my sons are one to three grade levels above their age and every academic subject. And so, when it comes to testing, it's barely, my son scored perfect in math last year, but what does that really tell anybody about how he's doing academically, what his strengths are? So even for the students who are doing very well, testing is not always the best way to show their strengths and demonstrate their ability. So, I'm going to get him out of here. Thank you very much.

SHAW: All right. Laurel, followed by Nikki.

LAUREL: Good evening. My name is Laurel Ward of Silverado, California. I have been homeschooling my children for 20 years. Two of them have graduated and the last one has two years to go. Let me start by saying how thankful I am to have the opportunity to be a home educator in Orange County, California. This is an amazing place to homeschool. We are surrounded by natural and cultural opportunities. I am so grateful to you, the trustees, the Board of Education, our OCDE, Superintendent Bean. Thank you so much for all you do for us for standing up for the rights of homeschooling families. As well as being a homeschool mom, I'm an advocate. I'm also honored to serve as a board member on Suncoast Preparatory Academy. Your support and encouragement of public school charters, public charter schools, especially non-classroom based charter schools, such as ours, has been incredibly meaningful to our family. Your efforts support every family in this room. Today, I ask you to vote for the five-year countywide charter of Suncoast so that our school can continue to serve families that thrive in this flexible educational model. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Nikki, followed by Heidi L.

NIKKI: Hello. I would like to finish Danielle's letter. "We recently just participated", this is from a parent. "We recently just participated in the CAA testing and it was quite the disaster. My son has special needs. He's autistic and nonverbal, although he really is partially verbal and has an intellectual disability diagnosis. He's currently in eighth grade, but developmentally he is between kindergarten and first grade. He's currently doing" okay, he's doing a lot of things, "but when he started testing, it was a disaster. It wasn't...", let's see. Oh, shoot. I missed it. Okay, wait. "As a parent of special needs a child, I always try and participate in everything, so Garrison lives a typical life as he would, but that kind of testing is not conducive to kids like Garrison. If testing companies cannot supply a test that is at these kids' developmental level, then we should easily be able to opt out. At Suncoast, I have seen a strong commitment to honoring parents' rights and recognizing that families should not be forced into participation." Thank you very much.

SHAW: Thank you. Heidi L., followed by Heidi M.

HEIDI: Oh, there's a second Heidi. Sorry. First, as so many have already expressed, I truly value your support as our authorizers and personally, it is always a pleasure to stand in front of you every board meeting. As an educational specialist at Suncoast and a former public school teacher, I strongly support a parent's right to choose. I've had meaningful conversations with my families over the years and honor the reasons for opting out a statewide testing, respecting that each family knows best how to serve their children's needs. Thank you so much for your support again.

SHAW: Heidi M., followed by Joshua.

HEIDI: Hi, thank you so much for having us. I'm the other Heidi. I'm Heidi Miranda. And I work with our youngest students at Suncoast, and so I would like to support the five-year countywide charter because I would love to see these little ones that I work with. I work with TK through first grade, and I get to see them with synchronous learning and supporting their families, but I would love to see them as they grow. And I love to see how they take in all this

new information and get supported by their families and by their teachers. And so that's why I want to support five years of our lovely charter.

SHAW: Joshua, followed by Rayanna.

JOSHUA: Hi, my name is Joshua and I'm a Suncoast student. I was from Ethan Allen Elementary School. State testing was lots of pressure on me, and now I'm in Suncoast and it's not that much pressure.

SHAW: Well said. All right. And last but not least, Rayanna.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hi.

RAYANNA: Good evening, Board and committee. Thank you for what you do. My name is Rayanna. I'm here for Suncoast mom with three children with all with special needs. Suncoast has been life changing for our family. My kids are supported, understood, and are able to learn ways actually work for each of them. State testing, however, creates a real anxiety for my children. It does not reflect what they know and truly had no choice. I would opt them out, but I feel I cannot. Please, because of these changes in our charters are renewed, participation rates and test scores are now directly impacted whether schools like Suncoast can continue to exist. So, I send my children to test, not because it's best for them, but to protect the schools that is. I'm asking you to please see families like mine and support schools that truly serve students as individuals. Please approve our new Suncoast. Thank you.

SHAW: That was the conclusion of those comments.

CHASTAIN: The public comment period is now closed. The board has three options for action. Option one, approve the charter petition. Please specify the charter term for the record if that is the option that you will be choosing. Option two, approve the charter petition with conditions. Again, please also specify the charter term for the record. Option three, deny the charter petition. President Barke, I now close the public hearing and return the meeting to you.

BARKE: Thank you very much, Aracely, and thank you to everyone who is here this evening. We really appreciate your comments. They're very heartfelt and they were heard, so thank you. And now I will turn it over to the board. I'll start with you, Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Okay. Aracely, would you come up? And ma'am, would you come up?

BARKE: Windi.

VALDES: Windi. So, Aracely, I went into detail and went through your staff recommendations and I want to start talking about them.

CHASTAIN: Okay.

VALDES: And I want to get a full understanding. Condition one is the, you're asking us to approve a condition to adopt a comprehensive plan to achieve a 95% participation rate on the statewide assessments.

CHASTAIN: Correct.

VALDES: And maybe this is also a question for Mr. Rolen, but the question I have is how can we do, I mean, I'm not going to tell parents that they're going to do something. I don't really care what the state law says. I think a parent has the option to opt out if they want to.

CHASTAIN: They do, yes.

VALDES: Okay. So, but you're asking to adopt a comprehensive plan, which directly would contradict a parent's right to opt out of that plan, right?

CHASTAIN: We're asking the school to provide us a plan for how they're going to increase participation in testing. Unfortunately, I mean, I understand they do have the option to opt out of testing. However, these tests are the ways that these charter schools qualify for high, middle, and low performing. And so, when they don't test the children...

VALDES: When they don't test, you say in the next somewhere else that that student is assigned the lowest possible academic pass score.

CHASTAIN: Correct. So that is what's going to push a school like Suncoast into the low performing.

VALDES: The parents deciding not to do this is also lowering their academic performance score.

CHASTAIN: Correct. So that's what happened with their current school is that they were pushed from the middle performing, even though their scores might be trending up into the low performing because they had such a large number of students for the past two years who didn't test, which means they get assigned that lowest score, which will push them down. That's not really reflective of what's happening in the school, but that's the model that we're working under here. And so, a school, they can continue to opt out. The school may never reach that 95%, but the goal is to reduce that number that get that lowest score so that the school isn't artificially pushed into that low performing tier. That low performing tier has really, the consequences of that is that they have to come up for renewal, a minimum of every two years. When you're low performing, it is a presumed denial automatically. And then we have to try to show why they should be approved for two years.

VALDES: Windi, maybe this is something from an educational perspective to your parents, that's a state law that we can't get around. Maybe that's something that you need to address with your parents. But Aracely, with respect to condition one, I'm not comfortable in creating a condition that directly contradicts the right of a parent to opt out. Windi, that's your problem.

WINDI: I understand.

VALDES: And that might be something that you need to address with your parents, but let's talk about condition two. Okay? Condition two is shall provide a plan of baseline data, annual performance targets and strategies to improve student outcomes. But this is sort of an offset of one, because there's a low percentage of kids participating in the test scores that their academic performance data is directly negatively impacted, correct?

CHASTAIN: What's negatively impacted is the Dashboard colors, right? So, this is based more on this information that we gave you here on page six with has to do with the CAASPP actual testing and the students that are performing at or above grade level. And those are the ones that are testing, right? What the school has explained to us and what we understand is that because students are typically not tested often or are testing maybe for the first time, kids may not be taking the test in a very meaningful way. They might be clicking through just to get through it quickly to show participation, but we don't know what is causing this, but they are performing below the state in a lot of these percentages.

VALDES: Hold on. But is that number impacted by the fact that they're not testing at all?

CHASTAIN: No, that's the Dashboard color that's going to be impacted. These are actual students that tested that we're looking at here. And so, what triggered that is that they are performing below the state. And so even if they only test 70% of their kids, we want those 70% of the kids that are testing to show that they are meeting or exceeding standards, and that's the part that we're not showing right now. And so, we want them to provide us with some more data and annual performance targets on how they're going to get these kids to test at the grade level or above.

VALDES: Is there any education code that requires me to ask for that condition?

CHASTAIN: There is no education code that requires any conditions at all. Education code basically says approve or deny.

VALDES: When we get to three, you cite an education code. We haven't gotten there yet.

CHASTAIN: Okay.

VALDES: Right?

CHASTAIN: Sure.

VALDES: Okay. There's no education code requirement that requires me to assign condition two, but let's talk about three, because you cite an education code on three and it's on page 29. "The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions required under Education Code 47605(c)(5)(A)(ii)." And then you say, "The petition does not adequately describe how the school will measure the percentage of students who pass an AP examination with a score of three or higher." Now, I heard in the presentation that they can't do an AP test because of the model itself. Am I correct on this?

CHASTAIN: Right. So that's what the school has told us. If they are unable to do this, this is the part of the petition that's the LCAP basically. The measures that are in the LCAP are what's here as well. These are the same things that they have to do annually. At this portion is when they do it in the petition because they don't have an LCAP yet because the school hasn't opened. This is basically their LCAP. There are certain areas where measures are required to be put in there, and this is one of those. I am not sure if they will have to do that one if they are unable to offer AP at all. It is the college readiness pursuant to early assessment...

VALDES: Hold on. I haven't gotten there. So as far as the advanced placement, they can't do it because this model just won't allow them to...

BARKE: Because they're remote.

VALDES: Because they're remote they can't do this, right? So then demonstrated...

CHASTAIN: But they will be able to, if they get a facility and they have notified multiple districts of an intent to open a facility there. So, they notified five different, I believe it's five districts of an intent to open facilities.

VALDES: Yeah, but I'm here analyzing and assessing this right now for tonight and they don't have a facility tonight.

CHASTAIN: No, but we anticipate that they will have one by the time they open in the fall.

WINDI: Right. But even with a facility, we have to go through a rigorous process and they may not ever approve us for a college board number just because of our model.

HENDRICK: And I will tell you, there are other schools that have, they rent facilities for testing and things like that. You are supposed to be required to offer AP classes to students who like them that is part of the code. I just want to make that clear.

VALDES: Okay. Thank you. All right. "The percentage of students demonstrating college readiness pursuant to the earliest EAP or any success for..." That's part of Education Code 47605.

CHASTAIN: It's part of what's required in that section, correct.

VALDES: Okay. Windi, why is that a condition that I should not ask for?

WINDI: Because we include other ways of testing readiness for college besides just AP. And some of our students do AP courses and tests from other...

VALDES: Well, hold on. Hold on. That's not what it says. It says EAP, early assessment program.

WINDI: Yeah, college readiness. So that doesn't just include AP.

VALDES: I'm not sure I understand your answer.

WINDI: Say the question again.

VALDES: Okay. This EAP, right, with respect to this education code, which requires this, I'm past the AP stuff, right? Because I don't think you can do it, at least not today.

WINDI: But it's connected.

VALDES: So how is it connected to this EAP?

WINDI: Because it's all showing that the child is ready for college readiness. AP, college concurrent enrollment.

VALDES: Are you saying you can't do this?

WINDI: We do already do the rest of it. The only part we can't do is AP.

CHASTAIN: This is requiring for them to add a percentage into that. We need that metric. The percentage of students demonstrated college of career. What is their goal? What is that percentage that they're trying to reach? That's the number we need that was missing.

VALDES: Windi, why shouldn't I ask for that?

WINDI: You can ask for that.

VALDES: You're okay with that?

WINDI: Yeah, I'm okay with that.

VALDES: Okay. I guess that's condition one. "The petition does..."

WINDI: We can give you that without a condition.

VALDES: "The petition does not include measure of goals or reporting metrics for school attendance rate, chronic absenteeism, and middle school dropout rate." Talk to me about that.

CHASTAIN: These are metrics that are required in the LCAP and therefore in the charter petition, just so they need to give us those measures or goals. What is their goal for school attendance rate? What's their goal regarding their chronic absenteeism? So that's for students that miss 10% or more of school. And what is their goal for their middle school dropout rate? They need to give us percentages on those.

VALDES: And that's required by the education code section.

CHASTAIN: That required to be in the LCAP, yes.

WINDI: That's required for the LCAP.

VALDES: And Windi, so what's wrong with those three?

WINDI: They're 0%. So, we don't struggle in those areas. So, we didn't include them in our LCAP tradition. Over the past years, we haven't included them because it's not an area we need to improve.

VALDES: Okay. What you're saying is you could very easily provide that data and its...

WINDI: Yeah, it's 0%, almost 0%. 99%. Yeah.

SHAW: Is it just because you're doing school at home, so even if you maybe got the sniffles, you're still able to do school, I suppose.

WINDI: Yeah, you can still do that.

SHAW: That makes sense.

VALDES: Okay. This stuff with the school engagement, this is just sending an email or some...

WINDI: Yeah, we could just add it or tell you guys what it is. We put it in our presentation what it is as well, the 99% and the two 0%.

CHASTAIN: Trustee Valdes, I just want to reiterate, what we're looking at here is we're evaluating the charter petition for compliance with ed code. Ed code requires these metrics to be in there, and these are part of the LCAP, and so that's why we've required it here. The board has not approved these types of conditions in the past. That's fine. We then look for them again in the LCAP, but this is the time to sort of look at that and say, "Okay, your middle school dropout rate is 10%. Are you okay with that? Are you not okay with that?" With this school, we have no idea what that percentage rate is.

VALDES: I got it.

WINDI: It was included in the narrative part of our petition, but it's not in our LCAP. But remember with a new school, we have to write a new LCAP. So, they're comparing our LCAP from Suncoast Preparatory Academy because that's what we use. So yeah.

VALDES: Okay. So, Windi, if I ask for this as the condition two, do you have a problem with that?

WINDI: Do you have to make them conditions? Can we just give you the information? Because we've already said it's 99% and 0%.

VALDES: Okay. You're providing us the information tonight?

WINDI: And any other time you want it.

VALDES: Then the only condition that really needs, that should be considered as that EAP or successor college readiness assessment?

WINDI: I think we can give them that too, right? We have that information. It's written in the narrative. It's not in the LCAP that's from Suncoast Preparatory Academy.

VALDES: Let me ask you this. If it's so easy to provide that, does the petition process simply not allow you to fill in the blank or fill in an extra line?

WINDI: I wish [several inaudible words].

VALDES: You have to assess just what they submitted and they can't change it at all?

CHASTAIN: They can, but sometimes we run out of time between our clarification meeting, the review, everything. And so, then we have to put it on here because we're not able to get that prior to that time. If it's something that we can easily get and we have time to collect it from the school, we try to do that as well. Just depends on timing sometimes and whether they have that information readily available. I don't know if they did have it or didn't have it or where it is, but these are areas in which it was not in the sections that it needed to be in, and so that's where we've written it down.

VALDES: Windi, so what is your college ready assessment number? What is it?

BETHANY: Because of our past participation...

SHAW: You better be out of the mic because we have Dr. Sparks. She can't hear you.

BETHANY: My apologies. Because of our 11th grade assessment participation last year, if we're basing just on CAASPP scores, it was at 41%. So, EAP is like a collection that includes that CAASPP score data, as well as AP, all of those metrics that get shown on the Dashboard. So currently, if we calculated ourselves because of participation, we were at 41%.

WINDI: But that doesn't include college concurrent enrollment on the Dashboard, which we have quite a bit of. Paige? Do you know what percent of our graduates are doing high school concurrent enrollment? In college?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 45%.

WINDI: About another 45% are doing college concurrent enrollment.

VALDES: Aracely, if that number was interlineated in the petition assuming we could do that, would that satisfy the condition that you are requesting?

CHASTAIN: We want to know what their goal is. What are they trying to get to?

VALDES: Okay, Windi, what's your goal?

WINDI: Well, we want to get to 100%.

CHASTAIN: If they put 100% and they're at 40 something percent, then what it is is what resources are you putting into reaching that metric that you've selected for yourself? That's the whole point of the LCAP, right? It's where are we trying to get to and where are our resources now? Our money is going to be tied into getting us into those places. The LCAP is not anyone's favorite document, but it's what we work with. Again, conditions are something that you are able to do or not able. If you want to, you do conditions. If not, you don't. There's arguments all over the state about whether conditional approvals are even a thing. So, we do that because we don't want to find a deficient petition and immediately say deny. We want to give them the opportunity to correct. And that's where these conditions come in. We give them time to do that.

It doesn't all have to be done within a couple of weeks while we're doing the petition review. It's here's your conditions. We'll give you until you start school in the fall to figure out these numbers, figure out what money you want to allocate, figure out how you're going to do this. And then we move forward from there. They're not punitive. They're just comprehensive.

VALDES: I'm just trying to figure out how important it is.

CHASTAIN: It's important to us that are looking at a petition for legal compliance.

VALDES: Windi, back to you.

WINDI: Yes.

VALDES: You didn't have a problem with setting the EAP college readiness assessment number as a condition. We already said that. What about these school attendance chronic absenteeism? Do you have a problem if that was conditioned too?

WINDI: No, we can give you guys all those numbers and include them or add them or redline them in. And also remember the LCAP is on a cycle, so you can increase and talk about how you're going to get to the next level every year.

VALDES: But I'm asking, if I asked the board to set it as a condition, do you have a problem with that?

WINDI: Well, I'd rather not have the conditions because we already have those numbers and we can work on that. But no, I'm not going to argue with you about it.

VALDES: Okay. All right. That's all I have.

BARKE: Sure. Why don't we call on Dr. Sparks next?

SHAW: She's a trooper out there. She's at a very different time zone.

SPARKS: Number one, I appreciate all the families coming out and speaking on behalf of the school and showing the enthusiasm for the school. And I think the parents are showing that the school is very successful and it's a model they believe in. Okay? I think that says it all. And I'm not a fan of this back and forth on all the conditions. I know Windi and her team will do everything they can to work with Aracely and her team to address any things that need to be addressed. I'm fully supportive of approving for five years without conditions, with the verbal commitment that Windi and her team will be working with Aracely to continue to improve in every category of the metrics that they're wishing. I also very much am on the side of parents having the choice to not participate in the testing if they so choose.

Now, a question for Aracely that I want clarification on. If we were to approve today of five years with no conditions, I heard you say something along the lines of if they have enough percentage of students who don't test, that they would go into some lower category and they could only be approved for two years. So that doesn't make sense to me. If we approve for five years with no conditions, how would they go back to this two-year thing if they're in that category? Can you explain that to me?

CHASTAIN: Their current school is a low performing, has fallen into that low performing category, partially due to that lack of students who test. They've been penalized. For all of the students who didn't test, they receive a penalty for those students. If this charter does not get approved, their current charter would be up for renewal this next year as a low performing school most likely. They would only get a two-year renewal. If you approve this school, if this school's, we're going to have to look at it when that time comes up. If you approve it for three years, we'll look and see where they are then. Four years, look then, five years, look then. In five years, they may be middle performing. We don't know.

SPARKS: You answered my question. If we approve for five years without conditions, which is where I'm headed, okay, then they won't have to visit this stuff for another five years based on our vote.

CHASTAIN: That's correct.

SPARKS: Okay. That was the clarification I needed. Thank you.

HENDRICK: Can I just clarify, Dr. Sparks? And this is for the countywide petition. Also, remember that these indicators could put them in differentiated assistance and other penalties. So just keep that in mind so they can't just forget about it for five years.

BARKE: Right.

SPARKS: Right. No, no, no. I'm not saying forget about it, but there's a contradiction there in the parental rights of not being required to do testing. And at the same time, if they choose that path, then they get in this lower category thing. So, there's a contradiction there that is a problem, I think, and there's a lot of edgy speak going on, and we're here to support parent rights. So, I'll just leave it at that.

SHAW: Well, the enthusiasm that you all brought is very obvious. And you didn't need much prodding to jump to your feet and start clapping at the beginning. And we noticed that and

appreciate it. And Windi and obviously Heidi are a couple of our regulars here and we love seeing your smiling face out there at every one of our meetings representing your school. So, for those who don't come all the time, you are well represented on a regular basis here at our board meeting. So, I did kind of have my brain questioning a little bit. When you have the model of the homeschool, if your student is sick and maybe doesn't do schoolwork that day, how does that get reported as far as, it's not the normal being absent, I suppose. Are the parents expected to just report to the school or is this reported that way?

WINDI: Yeah. Our parents take attendance along with our education specialists. And so, if a student is seriously not engaging in any academics for the day, they are marked absent.

SHAW: It is interesting. If I'm sick at home, I will just lay in bed and read or you're still mentally engaged, I suppose.

WINDI: Yeah, your brain's still working.

SHAW: Okay. Yeah. All right. Well, the conditions are not conditions. Trustee Valdes asked a lot of those questions I was going to get at as well. So, I'll just defer to my colleagues. Thank you.

WILLIAMS: I'm afraid to ask questions because Trustee Valdes, I already had a video made, so I have to be...

WINDI: That's right you got to be careful.

VALDES: By the way, I definitely appreciate that I caused a video.

WILLIAMS: Okay. I've been listening very intently. I have pages and pages of questions. And Aracely, if I can just have you come up here. Renee, you also made a comment that Suncoast is required to offer an AP course. Is that something that we failed to...

HENDRICK: I think all schools are required to have them available, is my understanding.

WINDI: They are available.

WILLIAMS: You have AP courses available?

WINDI: Not our school, because we can't get a college board number, but they can take them through vendors who, they take them through other partners of education.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Does that meet their state requirements then that we're ... okay, so they meet that state requirement then?

HENDRICK: As long as they are offered, yes. It doesn't have to be by them. It just has to be offered.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

CHASTAIN: And so that would be the information that we would need in that part of the petition.

WILLIAMS: Help me understand. So today is a little bit different in how we're evaluating charters with all these Dashboard requirements and assessments. This is kind of the first long conversation we've had about that. Is this a change in your unit?

CHASTAIN: No, this happened with AB 1505. So, the change in the charter law, it created these tiers for renewal, which is different than how it used to be. We just haven't had any renewals for a long time. And what's happening here is you have a school who is going to close their current school that has already gotten into those tiers and is in the low performing tier and opening a countywide school. It's the same students, same families who will be going into this countywide program. And so that's why we're trying to address some of these issues that we're seeing in the current school so that they don't affect the new school and potentially negatively affect that new school. If the school was not to be approved, if the countywide did not get approved, then they would be up for renewal next year, right? And so that's where we sort of were looking at the charter term.

We didn't know what the board might be comfortable with, whether—we would not ever recommend less than a three-year charter term because there's just not enough time to get adequate data at that point. So that's where we're suggesting three, four, or five years, whatever is the will of the board at that point.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

WINDI: I'd like to explain that it takes two years. It also takes two years...

CHASTAIN: Of data.

WINDI: Of data to move on that state indicator to move to the low tier or the middle tier.

WILLIAMS: So as Trustee Sparks expressed, I'm more aligned with her thought process and thinking, but then there's some serious issues, credible issues that you're bringing up here about all these dashboards. I don't want to make that a requirement, but it looks like it potentially could be a good thing for the school to have this data when you come up for renewal.

CHASTAIN: Yeah. I think the school is aware of, they're always very aware when they're falling into the lower categories, what that means for the school, what the potential ramifications of that are. We don't have schools that ignore that in any way. So, we know that they'll be working to do that. The only thing that you have here is us wanting to really sort of nudge them to hire participation that is not, I understand it's not really aligned with their model. It's not aligned with the families that seek this. It's just the system in which we work. And so, we're trying to sort of help them do that. Whether they do or not is completely up to them.

WINDI: But wait, we have gone from 33% to 75%, so we are making bright sides in the area of participation.

WILLIAMS: How about this? On your website, why don't you put all these dashboards so it's visible to everybody. It's transparent to everybody.

WINDI: Oh, they know. Our parents know.

WILLIAMS: But can you put it so it's documented so people can look at it and therefore all this controversy, all these people...

WINDI: Doesn't our website linked to our Dashboard?

BETHANY: Yeah. I believe the information, there is a link to the California Dashboard. Are you referring to us having our participation data that we collect and...

WILLIAMS: Because you already have it, right?

BETHANY: Strategic plan basically put onto our website.

WILLIAMS: Right. You already have this data. It's just not there in the public domain, so people can look at it. If you would do that...

WINDI: Yes, it's public information.

WILLIAMS: Would that make your issue and concerns Aracely?

CHASTAIN: What we're asking for here is just tell us what you're doing in order to increase your participation. That could be any number of things. This is an issue that with our independent study schools, not just our homeschool focused ones. All independent study schools have a hard time with test participation, and so they all have a lot of strategies to push that forward and get that minimum percentage. Most, while there may be a penalty, it's not significant enough to push them into a lower tier. This school happens to have a significant enough penalty that I think it did push them into that lower tier, and that's what we're trying to avoid. So, we're just asking them to tell us, what is your strategy for increasing participation and what's your plan to do that? They don't have to tell us if that's not something that you're interested in collecting from them, but we would like to support them in that, right?

What you're talking about, putting things on their website, potentially talking to families about the difference. Other charter schools have done a lot of different things to try to increase participation. We're just asking for that plan on what is it that you're doing in order to increase this, which is a very real problem considering the system that we operate in with renewing charter schools. Whether they want to just keep that to themselves and whether you're not interested in collecting that from them, that's completely up to you. We're fine either way. We just recognize this as a concern and wanted to bring that before the board, but this is a concern and it is something that we're definitely looking at. Even though they've increased, they are far from that 95% participation.

WILLIAMS: I think in the dialogue that we've had here, no one wants to put conditions or force people to do anything, but these are good things and efforts to describe publicly. Windi, do you agree or disagree with that?

WINDI: Well, they are described publicly and we talk to our families about the impact that them opting out is going to have on our school, but ultimately we aren't going to force our parents to test just because it's going to hurt our school.

WILLIAMS: I'm not referring to forcing testing. I'm just talking about what Aracely is saying is just document this, tell us what you're doing. Just put a simple sentence, mission goal. We want to have all our kids go to college. We want them to have a great education. We want them to have great memories growing up, educational achievement.

WINDI: I love that.

WILLIAMS: I mean, you could do a lot of things on your website and Aracely, is that what you're saying would meet your criteria?

WINDI: We also included our plan for increasing participation in our last board presentation.

CHASTAIN: Approving the school without conditions is fine. It's up to them to do these things, right? However they see fit, whether they find it to be important or not. We at that point would just defer to the you know, the board has decided that the school can deal with this on their own without having to submit any sort of plan or do anything formalized like that. If you believe the school's going to be working on this, is going to continue to try to do all this stuff and you—It just gives visibility to us and it gives visibility to the board. But if that's not an area that's important, that's absolutely where you guys come in to determine that. We just wanted to point out areas of concern. What you do with those concerns is completely up to you.

BARKE: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: What I see is Windi, you do have concerns about this. You're working towards this, you're working to resolve it to make it public, and you're asking us not to add conditions to this document, correct?

WINDI: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

BARKE: Okay. So first of all, Aracely, I want to say that everything you are doing, and I read through your conditions and they all sound very reasonable and I understand why you want the information and I appreciate, and I know my colleagues do the work that you put in to make sure that our schools are compliant, that they succeed, and all the reasons that we're here. And I understand why you don't want the conditions in it. What about if we, let's just say philosophically that we approved without conditions with an agreement from you that by our June meeting, you will come and present these answers to these three conditions.

WINDI: Talk again? No.

WILLIAMS: I want to see a video.

WINDI: That's right. Are you hearing this families? We need a video for...

BARKE: No, I mean, I just wonder if both of you would be comfortable you knowing that within 60 days, we're going to know the answers to this because you say you have them, it's just the timing we didn't get them and I think they're important. So, would you be willing to give us your word that you will be here, whatever our June meeting is?

WINDI: We're happy to come present again. My nerves love it.

BARKE: And so that all three—and you can send the information ahead of time to Aracely, but just so that within 60 days we have the conditions met. Is everyone comfortable? Everyone's comfortable that that will happen? Okay. And do you feel comfortable with that, Aracely?

CHASTAIN: I do. I can also give you another option. We could wait until they have to complete their LCAP, which will be in that next year, may not happen until June because we don't want them to do double the work necessarily. So, we'll do a whole review of their LCAP again. If they are still missing these metrics, we can then make sure that the board is notified.

VALDES: Windi, please don't miss it on the next time. Just put them in.

BARKE: Yeah.

CHASTAIN: We have quite a few schools who miss some of those metrics and we just let them know that they need to begin.

WINDI: Would you like to write an LCAP?

CHASTAIN: But yeah, LCAP's not anyone's favorite, but...

WINDI: Everyone loves it.

CHASTAIN: And then as far as the testing, we understand the issue there and we are 100% behind the parental choice and the reasons why they choose the school. But in order to continue to have a school that supports the homeschool model with a credentialed teacher and the resources that are provided by this school, there has to be some give and take here between the families and the school. And that's all we're trying to encourage here.

BARKE: And I think especially with all the families here tonight, they realize that even though kids may not like to test, you can give them an environment that is comfortable for them to test and we can get more testing just because it helps the viability of the school, which who cares about testing if we have no school. I think, I feel like a lot of people, there's enough people that realize the importance of that.

BETHANY: And I just want to say, we have really worked hard to rebuild a culture of assessment because people come to it from different places and with different experiences. So, it is part of our ongoing strategic plan to continue to work on those things and to help communicate and build that confidence.

BARKE: Right. And for just the viability of the school, I want, I know all of us, the community, everyone wants you guys to succeed and to be there, and so we'll have to do what we have to do to make sure that happens.

WINDI: Right.

BARKE: Okay. Dr. Williams is ready to make a motion.

WILLIAMS: By the way, what you have just observed is the public dialogue and consideration by elected people that are no different than you about what charter schools are about. And we're being accused right now in Sacramento for doing the wrong thing because we don't care and we don't take the time to listen and to implement good public policy. This was an excellent dialogue and proof that we really care about our constituents, our students, and every single one of you that are out there. Okay? It's a little political statement I just made because...

BARKE: And let me please also add that we appreciate all the work that Aracely and her team does because without that work [several inaudible words].

WILLIAMS: I will officially make a motion for option number one for five years with no conditions.

VALDES: I second.

BARKE: Okay. We have a motion, a second, roll call.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARK: Yes.

BARKE: Okay. It appears that some members of my team here would like to take a 10-minute break.

[The Orange County Board of Education takes a break and returns.]

BARKE: All right. Welcome back. Thank you. Aracely, please.

CHASTAIN: Next item before the board is a public hearing to consider the charter renewal petition submitted by Tomorrow's Leadership Collaborative, TLC, along with a material revision request to eliminate grades seven and eight from the charter. TLC's current charter term expires on June 30th of 2026. They operated transitional kindergarten through sixth grade charter school across two facilities located in the city of Orange. Based on the California School Dashboard and available academic performance data, TLC meets the statutory criteria for non-renewal pursuant to Education Code 47607.2. For the two school years immediately preceding this renewal decision. As part of its renewal petition, TLC's governing board adopted a comprehensive written improvement plan in December of 2025. The plan includes a documented root cause analysis and outlines targeted strategies to address academic performance, attendance, and instructional capacity. The plan is centered on three integrated strategies, accelerated standards aligned instruction in mathematics and literacy, a comprehensive attendance recovery and family engagement approach, and strengthened instructional capacity through sustained professional development, co-teaching, and implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports.

Based on the documentation provided and staff review, OCDE staff find that TLC has adopted a governing board approved improvement plan that reflects meaningful steps to address the underlying causes of its low academic performance. In addition, OCDE will implement an enhanced monitoring and oversight framework during the renewal term to ensure the plan is implemented with fidelity. Oversight and monitoring will be adjusted as needed to reflect reasonable implementation timelines and to ensure the board receives regular updates. Staff have worked collaboratively with the school to refine elements of the oversight schedule and remain open to further adjustments as appropriate. We will focus on three core areas, and those are the areas that are in her written plan, academic progress monitoring, attendance and engagement monitoring and implementation with fidelity and organizational capacity. The board will also consider action on the request of material revision. TLC is requesting to permanently remove grade seven and eight from its charter and operate solely as a TK through six program.

The school does not currently serve students in grade seven or eight. Staff find that the proposed revision align with the charter with current operations and does not adversely impact facilities, staffing, or services for enrolled students. OCDE staff recommend that the board approve TLC's charter renewal petition for a two-year term from July 1, 26 through June 30th of 2028, pursuant to Education Code section 47607.2(a)(3). Based on written findings that the school is taking meaningful steps to address the underlying causes of low academic performance as reflected in its governing board adopted improvement plan. If approved, staff further recommend execution

of an agreement to finding the operational relationship between the parties no later than the board's regularly scheduled June meeting. Additionally, OCDE staff recommend that the board approve TLC's material revision request to remove grade seven and eight from its charter petition. Representatives from TLC are allotted equal time and opportunity or 10 minutes, whichever is longer, to provide evidence and testimony in response to the staff recommendations and findings. I now invite the charter school representatives to the podium.

JESSICA: Glad you're here. Okay. Thank you, Aracely. Good evening, President Barke, Trustees of the Orange County Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Bean, everyone here, Charter School Unit staff and Orange County Department of Education staff. I didn't bring a big presentation. I do want to say a few things before I think some public comments may occur as well. I'd like to thank the Orange County Board of Ed for lots that you do for all students and families in Orange County and also for welcoming the TLC community last month at our public hearing. You were able to hear from TLC graduates, current students, parents, staff. You were highly attentive to the particulars of TLC, our unique model and the unique space that we fill in Orange County as an option for families, seeking a choice like ours where their children can be included in general education 100% of the time, regardless of any barriers to learning that their students may face in terms of ability, socioeconomic status, language, status, background, and experiences that they've had.

I thank you for seeing us. These are a lot of families and students that often are pushed aside, shut out of opportunities to kind of stand and make themselves known as learners in the space. I thank you for understanding that our option is vital to students' experiences of a positive education and to the families that choose to drive as far as they drive and to come from the 48 home schools that their students were initially assigned to attend TLC. I also thank you for understanding that the traditional metrics that schools are measured by are not fully capturing what TLC provides to students and families and to the educational experience that we want to make sure is offered. I think I was here with the last item, and I think we're not the only school in the space of education in Orange County, that those measures are not a full representation of what the school provides.

I know we were named one of the impact schools in Orange County by the Orange County Department of Education itself for our innovative model. We're very proud of that and we look forward to being able to continue operating if we are approved for renewal. I also would like to thank the Orange County Charter Unit staff in particular for your very careful review and consideration of our charter renewal request and our improvement plan that our board has adopted and already begun implementing during the '25-'26 school year. I'm very grateful for the staff report recommendations for renewal without any conditions, but with the enhanced monitoring and oversight that Aracely mentioned in introducing this item. We agree that monitoring will ensure TLC's success over the next few years as we seek to improve our status on the state Dashboard, even with the recognition that that's not fully recognizing who we are as a school.

We know that we are subject to measurement in those ways, and so we intend to demonstrate our excellence in all areas, including testing on the CAASPP for our third through sixth graders. We welcome oversight and annual visits, extra annual visits. Any annual visits are great. We welcome every board member to come and see us at any time. We welcome oversight and

monitoring of our implementation plan, our improvement plan and our implementation of it, and monitoring of our academic progress and our attendance and absenteeism. We have been in communication with Orange County Department of Education charter unit staff to refine the activities for monitoring and oversight that were laid out in the staff report. And those efforts on our part were to really make sure that those refinements align with our improvement plan that we've already been implementing. So, things like making sure that the reports that we will be submitting to the Orange County Department of Education charter unit staff align with our fall, winter, and spring benchmarks of i-Ready.

We want to make sure that the monitoring of the implementation of our improvement plan is thorough so that the county can be assured that we will make our improvements and we can be assured of success. Last, I just want to request, respectfully, a two-year renewal that we're eligible for, and that was recommended by staff for our charter and the material revision to have our charter accurately reflect the grades that we actually serve TK through sixth grade. And I will also respectfully request that the staff report after this meeting and hopefully after a successful renewal reflects those revisions and refinements that capture the mutual agreements for what monitoring and oversight will look like over the next couple years, so we can really use it on site as a tool that improve movement plan and the monitoring that goes with it as a tool for us to work transparently with our own staff, with our own families and with our students, so everyone has a shared understanding of what we're working towards over the next couple of years. And that's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

CHASTAIN: Okay. The public hearing is now open for 15 minutes of public comment. Trustee Shaw, please call for the first speaker.

SHAW: Very well. We only have four of you, so three minutes. Okay. We'll go with Charlotte followed by Javier.

CHARLOTTE: Hello. Oh, wow. Sorry. Didn't expect the mic there. Hello, my name is Charlotte Tunney. I was the first graduating class of TLC. There were, I believe, 13 people in my graduating class in 2021 or 2020. 2020. Wow, what a year. And I was there from fourth grade until sixth grade. I transferred out of my local district school and into TLC Public Charter. And I spent an incredible two years there. And what I really wanted to say is that, I think that TLC has so much of the community and the diversity that has been spoken of. And I would also like to mention the academics. I really thrived in TLC's academic environment. Specifically, they really encouraged the ability to have your voice be heard and speak out. Wow, I have a full three minutes. I only plan for one, but I'll keep going.

They really encouraged your voice to be heard. They encouraged students to follow their passions, and especially if they were interested in something like public speaking, something that, oh, I forgot to introduce what I do now. I go to Orange County School of the Arts, another charter. I'm in the acting conservatory, and I love public speaking. And I felt that TLC really accommodated that. My teacher allowed me to do another one of my passions, go and present every week on a Greek mythology. And a lot of students were allowed space for their voices in that way, and academically it's really helped me. I think that there's such a fear of being wrong in a lot of traditional academic settings that causes students to not want to participate or engage. And TLC does such an incredible job of allowing a person to make mistakes and still thrive.

And beyond that, the environment is so diverse and different that all of the different voices coming together really allow for such an incredibly strong learning system. And that's something that I valued so much during my time there, and it really has impacted me over high school. I feel that my ability to do well in high school is directly related to my time at TLC and my ability to feel that I could be wrong and feel that I could make a mistake and nonetheless excel academically. And I really, it was the diversity of the place and the ways in which the students came together, no matter who they were of different backgrounds. It was academically wonderful and just in a community way, wonderful. It was wonderful to get that other kids. And I also went there during the pandemic, and I still felt that they did an excellent job at making sure that kids were heard.

There was a hybrid. It was a wonderful, wonderful time. And that's all I have to say. I thank you all for your time and I loved TLC.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay. Javier, followed by Michal.

JAVIER: Hi. Good evening. President Barke, Trustees and Superintendent Bean. I've been on behalf of the Charter School Association representing the Orange County. I respectfully recommend approval of the charter renewal petition for Tomorrow's Leadership Collaborative TLC, which is a member in good standing of CCSA. CCSA has worked closely with TLC leadership and has witnessed their strong commitment to serving students with unique needs. TLC currently serves approximately 215 students across 48 homeschool sites, representing families from 15 local districts. For more than eight years, families have chosen TLC for special ed programs and supportive environment. Approval of this renewal will ensure the continuation and expansion of these critical services for students and families, including those from historically under service communities. TLC students population includes approximately 24% students with disabilities, 81% Hispanic or Latino students, 17% English learners, and 72% socioeconomically disadvantaged students. CCSA has reviewed the Orange County Department of Education staff report for TLC and does not identify any legal barriers that would prevent approval of this petition.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the board to approve the charter renewal for tomorrow's leadership collaborative. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Is it Mishall?

HENDRICK: It's Michal.

SHAW: Michal. Followed by John.

MICHAL: Superintendent Bean, President Barke and rest of the board. I'm Michal Doesburg and a member of the TLC board. This month, I'm starting my sixth year on the board. And I am one of the four of us on our board that were here last month for the presentation. I know we had a great turnout, but I want you to know that our board is very active with TLC. And I want to thank you for considering us and hopefully approving our school's renewal. TLC has become a school for the children who have, some of them have fallen through the cracks. And I, as a special ed teacher, I'm retired now in the public system. I prevented some of those children from

falling through the cracks personally and got in some good trouble for increasing our percent of students at our school. But the ones that aren't caught do find their way to TLC and other parents, as you heard last month, that are seeking the innovative techniques and the inclusivity of TLC.

Our board is very aware of the academic performance and challenges and aware of the why of our population that we serve. So, I want to assure you that we will approve and continue to monitor all the actions that you have, the implementation of the plan, hopefully that you're approving. Our board is very passionate and we are there every month passing what we need to and finding out what is going on with the schools. I love visiting the school to see the diversity and how all the, everything happens. And I want to let you know that we have a book written about our school and it is a research and a case study, *Voices On The Margins* by Yenda Prado and Mark Warschauer. And what it talks about, they're studying everything that's happening at this school. It discusses the data collected for three themes, social organization that allows the inclusive group to thrive, ways in which digital technologies can be used to help students express their voice and gain confidence. And we could see that that happens and how the technologies can be used to improve and have communication within the students. Thank you. Come visit us. You will have a positive experience.

SHAW: And John.

JOHN: Hey, everybody. It's on good. First off, I want to give you guys a thanks for everyone that's come up and spoken today for this school and everyone else. It's super, super important. And I also wanted to talk about a very, very, very important gift that TLC has given me. I am currently 10th grade at Samueli Academy. Anthony Sabas, not here, but I see you every day. I love you. And I am a TLC graduate just a few years after my sister. The thing is, as a person that was at TLC, as a student in my very, very young years of life, I got to interact with so many different kinds of people from all different kinds of walks of life and different backgrounds and people that were entirely different than me in every way possible. And the thing is, because I got to interact with people that I would otherwise never get to, because it was such a diverse setting where everyone came together to learn, I got to be able to learn how to talk with people I wouldn't before, because believe it or not, people are really different.

Even people that you'd think are similar are just so different than one another. And so, then that's not accounting for the fact of people who are obviously very different in so many ways. And because of that, when I'm in high school right now, honestly, I wouldn't have been half the student I am now in high school if I hadn't gone to TLC way, way back when I was just maybe half the height I am today, because it makes it so, and I believe this in my whole heart, it makes me a better person to have been with and understood people that are so different than me that unless I was at the very small levels of my life, if I weren't with them at those very important stages, I wouldn't have been able to understand. And also similar to my sister's point, TLC was a place where I was not afraid to screw up and be weird at all.

I was not the weirdest person there by a mile, and that's saying something considering I am strange. And so, because of that, I was never afraid to screw up and make mistakes. And I learned that making mistakes is not only really important, but it can also be really fun to learn how you screwed up and how you can fix that. Again, if I didn't go to TLC, I would not be half the person that you see standing in front of you right now. And again, I just wanted to say thank

you board, thank you people here, thank everybody that left to go at a more reasonable time and just thank you so much to TLC just in general. Thank you. Good day.

SHAW: That's it. No one could have followed that anyway. That was ...

CHASTAIN: The public comment period is now closed. The board has three options for action regarding the charter renewal petition. Option one, approve the charter petition for a two-year term from July 1, 2026, through June 30th of '28. Option two, approve the charter petition with conditions as determined by the board, or option three, deny the charter petition. The board also has three options regarding the material revision, approve the material revision as written, approve the material revision with conditions, or deny them the material revision. President Barke, I now close the public hearing and return the meeting to you.

BARKE: Thank you so much, Aracely. Appreciate it. Let's start with Dr. Sparks out there and never, never land.

SPARKS: Okay. I just want to say to Jessica and then the TLC team, the important gap that you all are filling for parents of Orange County is just to be commended. I think I said something along those lines last month. I think what you do is just amazing and the parents who have opportunity to participate in your school, I think are incredibly fortunate. And as such, I'm going to be supportive of the renewal for the two years without conditions.

BARKE: Thank you. Let's start with Dr. Williams this time.

WILLIAMS: You're not going to make a video of me, right? Okay. On a serious note, John, that was probably the most profound and logical statement that I've heard in a long, long time. That is making mistakes is really important and that's so very true because if you don't make mistakes, we don't improve and we don't get better. And we don't say the right thing. No, it is very deep philosophy in that statement. Thank you for making that. As far as the decisions here, Aracely, I just have a question because what we're talking about with these conditions, these are fairly new that the staff is recommending. And I like to understand the, we respect the staff, so let me digest to that fundamental belief. You guys are awesome, but why are the changes?

CHASTAIN: What's different here is we, well, one, this is the first time that we've done a renewal on a low performing school. We're sort of learning this as we go, and Jessica has been a great partner with me in order to kind of navigate how to do this. We don't want to put extra conditions on the school. Their plan is comprehensive and includes a lot that they are trying to do in a short period of time, which is why they've already started working on it from like last December. So, they're more than six months into it and they don't have a lot of time to implement their plan or pivot or anything. What we normally do whenever we ask for a plan from any school is that we then monitor the plan, right? And that's not something necessarily that the board's aware of.

It's what we do under the direction of the superintendent. We're monitoring that when they give us an academic improvement plan, when they give us any sort of a plan on something we've sent a notice of concern on, we're then monitoring that they're actually implementing what they say they're going to do with fidelity. And that's what we're trying to do here. What we've done is

we've taken her plan and we're looking at it and looking at areas in which we can sort of do touch points with her and check in and do that in a way that hopefully doesn't disrupt what she's trying to do at the school. All we're trying to do here is give the board a little bit of visibility into what our oversight looks like whenever a school submits a plan to us. And we decided to do it here with this school because we're not going to do additional conditions for them, but we wanted to give the board some visibility into what we will be doing in these two years and not just leaving them to it, basically.

A couple of, we'll be doing multiple visits on site. We're asking them, but it's all based on what she's given us. We did have a conversation on that because some of the dates that I had put in there, some of the timelines were not conducive to when they're going to have data to give them, why did you need this, that sort of stuff. This is just sort of giving you an idea of what we're doing. All of our oversight is always based, it's individualized to each school in a lot of ways, and a plan like this could vary how we do it. While we're having, we put in the plan that we want her to come and present to the board a couple times a year, that may not happen depending on the board's schedule.

It may just be a written update, it may just be a public comment, or you may want to give her time on the agenda. We don't know what that's going to look like at this point, but we want to at least put it out there that this is a possibility that we'll be doing this. For the most part, I think Jessica was amenable to what we were doing once we had the kind of conversations on timelines and what we're requesting, and that it is all based on us just monitoring her plan and her implementation of her plan. We don't want to get two years in at her next renewal and then come to you and tell you she hasn't done her plan the way she told us that she would. We want to have those touch points in between. And then also, if she runs into any sort of an issue at any point during this next year and a half, if we have resources here at the Department that could potentially step in, we want to make sure that we are aware of where she's struggling and have those resources there.

It isn't a formalized condition. It isn't anything like that. I understand that she's saying she'd like something in writing, sort of delineating these things, and we can absolutely do that for her so that she can have those conversations with her staff and her community about what we're doing extra. But there are no conditions for you to approve here. We're just trying to give you a little bit of insight into what we do when we receive a plan.

WILLIAMS: No, these are very good insights and I think they're important and especially because State Senator Umberg, who is running for the Board of Equalization, is trying to get points publicly. He's attacking us on how we approve our charter schools. So, this is really good because this board takes it very seriously, what we're doing here. Just a real quick question. You're okay with these conditions you shared with us when you were up there? Yeah, yeah. Please come up.

JESSICA: So, thank you for the question and thank you for checking in. As Aracely said, they're not actually conditions, they're monitoring activities, and so I assume there would be monitoring for us and we're okay with that. What I was requesting could be reflected is some of the revisions to the way the plan is laid out for enhanced monitoring so that it's not burdensome to us. So, for example, we do fall, winter, and spring benchmarking of our internal testing with i-

Ready for verified data. A quarterly report becomes burdensome for that because there's not a fourth quarter when we do that for summer. So, we've mutually agreed. Actually, it makes sense for us to share a summary of student progress after fall, winter, and spring administration. That's not burdensome. We're fine with that. We're fine with monitoring that we're implementing our improvement plan, not fine with monitoring that the Dashboard shifts like this spring because it's a lagging indicator. It does capture two years of progress. So those are the conversations we've been having to adjust and refine what the monitoring looks like so that it matches, as Aracely said, what we're already doing with our improvement plan. If they were conditions, I would be requesting not to have conditions. They're not conditions. It's just specification of monitoring and our relationship around that. And that actually is fine for us because we're already doing it.

WILLIAMS: I think that's a very important point that you just made.

JESSICA: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: You're already doing the things that are outlined here.

JESSICA: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I'm going to support without conditions.

JESSICA: I appreciate the question.

BARKE: All right. Why don't we go to Tim next, because you always go last.

SHAW: Okay. Can you remind me, I was trying to remember this. What percentage of your students are on an IEP?

JESSICA: Right now it's 24%, which is more than twice the state average.

SHAW: Yeah.

JESSICA: And they also skew towards students who have the most extensive and complex support needs, as opposed to students that have what would be considered mild, like dyslexia or something like that.

SHAW: Forgot if I mentioned you. My wife's a special ed teacher.

JESSICA: Yes.

SHAW: We have a son with autism, so that does a lot for us. The material revision is eliminating grades seven and eight that was technically part of your charter, right?

JESSICA: Yes.

SHAW: And then the renewal for two years is just being done concurrently with that because it's all wrapped into one. Do I have this right?

JESSICA: Yes, you have that exactly right. And we don't have capacity to offer seventh and eighth grade right now with our facility. The model doesn't, we can't enact it, so we'd rather wait.

SHAW: Okay. Thank you.

JESSICA: Thank you.

VALDES: Aracely, I've been talking to you about this issue of conditions for a couple of years now and all of a sudden we found a way to call this enhanced monitoring and just put it right into the contract. And I love it, quite frankly, because it's not an actual condition.

CHASTAIN: Well, it won't go into an agreement or anything like that. It's literally just giving you visibility into our oversight, which we do in the background.

VALDES: Well, look, I'm just going to say, I really like this one and I like the way you wrote this one. Jessica, I wanted to mention a couple of things to you. When I look at these, I think first and foremost, and most importantly, I really look at the executive director. So, I've been looking at you and you are extremely eloquent in your speech. You are clearly, extremely competent in what you are doing, passionate about what you're doing. You pass my test for an executive director with flying colors. I look at your finances and your parents support. You clearly have that. No one raised any red flags about your finances. No, you clearly had a bunch of parents here. One parent said your school actually saved their child's life, which is a very significant statement, at least to me, because I do listen to what people say here. But I also wanted to mention something about my personal life experience, and I wanted to comment about that, because I also believe in an open dialogue up here.

And I just say what I'm going to say, and you can take it or not, but I think it's important for me to share it. I mentioned to you last month that I have a particular life experience where I have an older son who went through the education process in Orange County and was dramatically below grade level the entire time, significantly autistic, nonverbal, multiple years below grade level. And then I have a son now who's eight years old, who is testing three years above grade level, and that is really due to my wife and the things that we do at home, and I don't want to go into that. So not everyone has that experience, but I wanted to share that with you and my comments about your school and the model in particular, because from a social and emotional learning standpoint, I think what you are doing is extremely valuable.

Okay? I think you are taking nonverbal kids with IEPs, putting them right in with neurotypical kids. And there's a lot of learning that can be done with that. Excuse me. The neurotypical kids are, wait, I need water. The neurotypical kids are...

BARKE: I have a cough drop if you need it.

VALDES: Are very naturally going to learn a lot from interaction with the kids with the IEP kids, the nonverbal kids, and vice versa. And I can totally see why parents want that. My

struggle, quite frankly, is when I think about putting my older son and my younger son academically in the same classroom, I really, really struggle with that. And I just want to share that with you. I struggle with the concept that you're going to maximize the academic learning from both kids, putting them in the same room 100% of the time with the same teacher and the same academic plan. I'm going to support your school tonight.

JESSICA: Thank you.

VALDES: But I wanted to share that with you. I want you to come back two years from now and just prove me wrong, okay? And I invite you to do that. And it's one of those things that I want to be wrong, okay? I don't think I'm wrong, but I want to be wrong. And like I said, I believe in an open dialogue up here, and I wanted to share that with you. That's my reservation with the model itself, but I believe in what you're doing. You are clearly very good at what you're doing, and so I will be supporting you tonight. Okay?

JESSICA: Thank you, Trustee Valdes. I appreciate that. And I look forward to proving you wrong. I also invite you anytime to come, and I don't want to speak out of term, but I will mention Ms. Leal and I, after last month, we were like, "We wish we could have had your kids at TLC." Because if your son, your older son, had had that experience of being in the room with the other learners in the room, I think it might have given you an understanding of what the value of the school is for him and then also for your younger son. We didn't get that chance, but I'll come back and share the data with you so you can see how they make progress.

VALDES: Okay.

BARKE: Okay. All right. I'll be short. I'll close it up. I'll say I've been to your school. I love it. I love that you have all those kids together and that they're thriving and that one is getting so much from another. They're getting different things from each other, but I just love it. And I know that if TLC did exist, I think some kids wouldn't be in school. I think you are home for kids that might not go anywhere else. And I love that about your school. And I love that it's just this mix of just a bunch of kids. So thank you for what you do because it's amazing and I know it's not easy and I know you have all of these not written conditions, but you have a lot you have to do in the next two years and I know you've been working on it and anybody can do it. I know it's you. And thank you Aracely for guiding them because I know from talking to Jessica how much she appreciates that and appreciates working with you and the discussions you've had and how open you are to working together. Thank you for everything you do and I will now make a motion to approve your school.

HENDRICK: I'm sorry. Lisa.

BARKE: No, Lisa went first. Okay. I was just double checking. I was afraid I'd forget her, so I had to go first. Thank you though. I appreciate it because I'm likely to forget her and that's why she went first. So anyway, I will go ahead and make a motion to approve you for two years without conditions. May I have a second?

SPARKS: Second.

BARKE: And a second from Dr. Sparks. Yay. Roll call vote please.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw.

WILLIAMS: I have a question on parliamentary procedures. On page 48, you're making the motion for option one, but then right below that, on page 48, there's three options.

HENDRICK: You have to do two separate motions. There's two motions.

WILLIAMS: Okay. There'll be two votes. Okay.

BARKE: Yeah, this is to approve the school.

WILLIAMS: Your next motion is going to be for the material review.

BARKE: Yes, but I'm doing them one at a time. Yes. Okay.

WILLIAMS: Perfect. Thank You.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Okay. Now I'll make another motion to approve the material revision to remove grades seven and eight. And thank you for knowing you can't do it and just changing it. That's a good thing to do.

WILLIAMS: I'll second that.

BARKE: And a second?

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Of course, please.

HENDRICK: I would just like to really commend Jessica and the TLC team on behalf of the charter unit. The amount of time and effort that they put in to the renewal petition is really, that's not something we've seen that often and we really respect that you really took it seriously and you really worked on the academics. We were very proud of what the outcome was. And so, I don't think we see that type of effort coming through as much, and so we're really proud of you.

BARKE: Well, thank you. That's good.

WILLIAMS: Thank you for sharing that.

SHAW: She doesn't make a lot of comments like that. You better pay attention there.

BARKE: And every other school that's listening, pay attention.

JESSICA: Thank you so much.

CHASTAIN: We'll now open a public hearing to grant or deny the material revision request submitted by Orange County Workforce Innovation High School. The countywide charter school serves students in grades nine through 12, currently at one location in Anaheim. The school is requesting approval of a material revision to add a facility within the boundaries of Garden Grove Unified School District at 7075 New Hope Street in Fountain Valley. Staff reviewed the revised charter petition, determined that it meets the standards outlined in Education Code 47605 and recommend approval of the material revision. The addition of a second site would allow Orange County Workforce to serve students in another region of the county consistent with its countywide authorization while maintaining compliance with statutory and operational

requirements. Representatives from the charter school will now have up to 10 minutes to provide testimony regarding the proposed material revision. I invite the charter school representatives to the podium.

LILIANA: Hi, good evening. My name is Liliana Childs, regional director of educational support services for Workforce Innovation High School, and former principal with Innovation High. Joining me this evening is our new Principal Ms. Sandy Salazar. We would like to take a moment to express our sincere appreciation to this board for your continued support of our program. We are deeply committed to serving some of the most vulnerable youth ages 14 through 24 by providing personalized learning experiences and supporting the whole child through comprehensive wraparound services. While we do not have a presentation tonight, this evening, we are here and welcome any questions that you may have.

CHASTAIN: The public hearing is now open for 15 minutes of public comment. Trustee Shaw, are there any speakers for this item?

SHAW: Yeah, I'd like to speak. No. We don't have any cards.

CHASTAIN: As there are no public comments, the public comment period is now closed. The board has three options for action. Option one, approve the material revision. Option two, approve the material revision with conditions or option three, deny the material revision. President Barke, I now close the public hearing and return the meeting to you.

BARKE: Thank you so much. I will start with Dr. Sparks again in order not to forget her.

SPARKS: I have no questions at this time. Thank you.

BARKE: Wonderful. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: I have no questions.

BARKE: Wow. Did you guys hear that? No questions. Trustee Shaw.

SHAW: Well, sorry you have to go last and you've had to hang out with us all night long, but I do believe this was the first school I toured when I got elected at the board. I think that's my recollection.

BARKE: Me too.

SHAW: Was that right?

BARKE: Yeah. I mean, I think I was on that tour with you, but I think Lisa and I toured that school as well right after we toured one before our election and one after, and I think you were the first school after. Yes.

SHAW: And it really stuck with me and been very impressed obviously with you guys and the great work you're doing. I don't have any questions. Just a lot of compliments though from me.

BARKE: Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Sure. Just real quick. You're adding a reserve center in Fountain Valley. Yeah. Come on up there. Liliana, is that right? Liliana. You're adding another center, another building in Fountain Valley.

LILIANA: Correct.

WILLIAMS: And where is that specifically?

LILIANA: It's on Euclid. You have that correct address, right, Aracely? I don't have the top of the address on my mind right now, but it's in Fountain Valley within the Garden Grove School District.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And 40% of your students are adults?

LILIANA: Correct.

WILLIAMS: 30 students live near the center. And you have about 250 students altogether. Your budget's \$7.6 million. And your ending balance is \$116,000 and you have in reserves \$1.6 million. Is that right?

LILIANA: Correct. Correct.

WILLIAMS: It's pretty good memory.

LILIANA: You got it.

WILLIAMS: No these are notes. I'm just kidding. Okay. I'm very happy with what you're doing and I'm going to fully support this item without any reserves.

LILIANA: Thank you. Thank you so much.

BARKE: Well, we're going to reward you for going last and we're not going to grill you and we're just going to make this super easy. And the other thing I think is that we really don't have any charters in Garden Grove, so that will be a nice addition to the community. Thank you for realizing that. I think that that was actually strategic that you realized that. Thank you for doing that because that's important to have good charter schools and to have them in areas where we're not saturated. Thank you for that. And I'm going to go ahead and make a motion to approve.

WILLIAMS: I'll second.

BARKE: And we have a second.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Yay. There's not all the rigamarole, but yay.

WILLIAMS: Congratulations.

BARKE: Okay.

SHAW: I think we're on item 22.

BARKE: Yes. We are now on item 22, which I actually asked...

WILLIAMS: To be put on?

BARKE: Yes. I actually put this one on.

WILLIAMS: You're going to make the motion?

BARKE: Yes. I will make a motion for item 22 and that's in support of SB 1082.

SPARKS: Second.

BARKE: Okay. We have a second from Dr. Sparks.

SHAW: Mari, would you want to explain this bill real quick?

BARKE: Yes, absolutely. As a matter of fact, I brought some notes because there's a wonderful website with all kinds of FAQs and notes. Some common questions are, does this bill eliminate a district's ability to deny an inter district transfer? And no. It simply allows the districts of residents to waive review of exit requests where appropriate while requiring districts that choose to review or deny exit requests to do so in a timely fashion. It does not change a district's desired attendance authority to approve or deny interdistrict transfer requests based on capacity, program availability, or locally adopted criteria. While it ensures districts that choose to deny expert

requests will do so within a clear and timely framework. SB 1082 does not in any way require a district to accept a student. It cannot accommodate. It doesn't change any of that. It just really streamlines the process is what it's doing.

It preserves the receiving district's authority to deny requests due to capacity or other lawful criteria. The timelines that SB 1082 provide help ensure that families receive timely and predictable decisions while existing law requires districts to establish timelines for responding to interdistrict transfer requests under Code section 46600.2. It does not clearly address situations where no response is issued. This, which has led to delays, and we see them ourselves when they come here. So basically SB 1082 streamlines a process. For most districts, the bill is expected to reduce administrative burden associated costs by allowing the districts that routinely approve interdistrict transfer requests to waive review and avoid unnecessary processing. For districts that choose to review or deny requests, that bill simply establishes a reasonable and predictable timeline by doing so. By clarifying timelines and allowing concurrent review, SB 1082 helps reduce delays and unnecessary appeals supporting a more efficient process.

SB 1082 does not create a new obligation for receiving districts. It clarifies when review may occur and aligns timelines with responsibilities that already exist in statute. What the bill changes is timing, not responsibility. The 30-day timeline reflects existing practices and provides sufficient time for districts to act while ensuring families receive timely decisions and process remains predictable. It applies prospectively to new inter-district transfer requests. Existing interdistrict transfer permits are not affected. The criterion for approval remains the same. By reducing delays in unnecessary appeals, it may actually serve to support more stable enrollment planning across the various districts. And does this change a parent's appeal rights? No. While participation interdistrict transfer agreements is voluntary, the procedures that apply once a district chooses to participate or not.

SHAW: If I understood that right, it's kind of getting an answer to a family that's trying to do an appeal or a transfer more quickly.

BARKE: Yes. And what it does is before silence acted as a denial, if nothing happened, it was denied. And you didn't know if it was denied because of workload or why it was denied. In many cases it was denied because of workload. This put the time constraint and if nothing happens, it's actually approved. So, it requires action within 30 days, but you can easily deny it, but it's not just stuck someplace.

VALDES: I have a question for you, President Barke, maybe also for Greg Rolen, but we had a district who will remain completely anonymous months back. And I remember they had arbitrarily set a timeline of one week and the parent submitted their paperwork one week and one day later. And it was a comment that I made that I did not think it was appropriate for them to arbitrarily set a timeline, not advise the family of that. And then the family was one day, quite literally one day late. That was their reason for why they thought we should deny. Is this going to affect something like that?

BARKE: I'm not sure that that is affected. What this is allowing is that they don't just die on somebody's desk. This is also allowing a concurrent review. The school that would be accepting the child can be reviewing it while it's being reviewed, will the child be let out of their district?

But I don't believe it's going to, I mean, that was just crazy. That was an aberration. And Greg, if you want to comment on that, please.

ROLEN: I really don't need to. That was a crazy aberration.

BARKE: Okay. Thank you.

ROLEN: Yeah, this law's not necessarily related to those circumstances, but it does firm up the timelines a little bit.

BARKE: Okay. Yeah. What it does is it makes it more predictable for administrators and families is what it's doing. Any questions, comments?

WILLIAMS: Thank you for looking at me so I now can say a few words. So just for the record, so everybody can know what we've been doing in the past. We will follow legislation. We have a legislation committee. We have Thomas Sheehy in Sacramento who helps us through the process of supporting or opposing certain legislation. This one, particular one is by Senator Niello. Did I pronounce that right? He's a Republican or Dem?

BARKE: He is a Republican. He is what you call, he's a soft Republican. He's somebody who gets along with a lot of people. And I think because he brought the bill, it will get...

WILLIAMS: He has good people's skill.

SHAW: It's a technical term.

ROLEN: Yeah. I'm not familiar with that.

BARKE: I guess it means he's not a crazy Republican as some people would say he is somebody that reaches across the island, gets along with people. His values may be more Republican than Democrat, but he is what I would call a soft Republican.

WILLIAMS: Does this bill have bipartisan support out there in Sacramento? Do you know?

BARKE: I believe it does. I believe it does.

WILLIAMS: And part of our process, just again for the record, for those who may be listening or who may be doing an audit, this is very normal, Mr. Rolen, correct, that certain elected bodies will take positions on certain bills that affect them. And this particular bill impacts what we do because we do a lot of interdistrict transfers. I love what you just said. I love the context and what this will accomplish.

BARKE: And it was actually, the bill was initiated by a county board member. I can't remember what county..

ROLEN: San Mateo.

BARKE: San Mateo, who actually, because of the frustration of these dying and then families coming and saying, "Well, I didn't know. " And so that's why it was just to make it more predictable.

WILLIAMS: Right. In a very public and transparent way, we are supporting public policy in Sacramento. And so just for the record, is there a formal motion on the table?

BARKE: I think I made it and you seconded it. Did that not happen?

SISAVATH: Dr. Sparks.

BARKE: Oh, Dr. Sparks seconded it. Sorry. I think somebody did. Yes. So yes, there is a motion. Yes. Any other discussion? No. Are we ready to vote? All right. I think we're ready.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Okay. Well, thank you. All right. Moving right along to item number, that was 22. Let's see. Let's get back to...

SHAW: Now we're going to have some real fun. Item 23.

BARKE: I know, but why? I don't have a 23 tab in my book. Why don't I have this?

ROLEN: You don't. I don't either.

HENDRICK: It's a discussion. There's no agenda item.

BARKE: Oh, okay. Okay. But I...

SHAW: This was the discussion of the joint legislative audit committee report. Our general counsel has a report prepared, I believe.

ROLEN: Thank you, Mr. Vice President. Yes, this is a report on the joint legislative audit committee audit that has been referenced by some of the speakers here and by Trustee Williams today. On March 10th, we received, for lack of a better term, an invitation. Trustee Shaw received an invitation to appear before the joint legislative audit committee. Now we think Trustee Shaw got the invitation.

SHAW: I'm the best looking.

ROLEN: That's not what I was going to say.

SHAW: That wasn't the right answer.

ROLEN: Yeah, I'll work that in. We think he got the invitation because the last time we were in a room with the requester, Senator Umberg, Trustee Shaw was the president. They sent it to him thinking he was still the president. And much like the last time we were in the room with the requester, Senator Umberg was concerned with this board and this board only. You fought and you. I didn't forget you. We had two weeks to prepare written materials and submit them to the committee. On March 24th, Mr. Sheehy and I appeared before the committee and testified, and we prepared a clip so you can understand the tenor of the request and the board's response. If we could play that.

[Video plays]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We now have our witnesses from the Orange County Board of Education. So please, gentlemen, when you're ready.

ROLEN: Honorable members of the committee, my name's Greg Rolen. I represent the Orange County Board of Education. Senator Umberg's audit request lacks any factual predicate whatsoever. We prepared a comprehensive legal review for the committee, including every possible allegation raised in the letter, including the mechanisms for resolution and multiple declarations under penalty of perjury. Here are the facts. There has been no formal complaints against the Orange County Board of Education in the last five years, none. Going in order of Senator Umberg's concerns, there have been no Title VI, Title IX, or IDE complaints filed against the board. There's been no Brown Act to cure incorrect demands. There have been no public records act litigation, and there have been no Political Reform Act complaints against the board. There's been no taxpayer actions. There's been no criminal referrals. There has been no whistleblower or retaliation cases brought against the board. Regarding charter school oversight.

In the last five years, the board has rendered 33 decisions on charter schools and only one has been challenged. And in that case, the State Board of Education ruled unanimously in the board's favor. There have been no complaints alleging violations of the public contracts code. All board members have their required ethics training, and the board has ruled on over 100 interdistrict transfer appeals or expulsion appeals. In the last five years, that's their primary statutory responsibility, and yet there's been no challenge from either a parent or school district in that

regard. Litigation, yes. The board has participated in litigation in accordance with state law. And if their participation was impermissible or improper, the courts would have so ruled. They did not.

And much like this legislature, the board is immune from acts taken in the course and scope of their employment. Some of Senator Umbert's more subjective concerns such as ideological influence or fiscal prudence, there is no legal recourse, but there is recourse at the ballot box and the board trustees have won eight of the last elections losing none. So, on behalf of the board, we ask if there's no complaints where there's multiple statutory enforcement mechanisms available, yet none were ever invoked, and the voters have spoken and will continue to speak. What justifies this audit and why now? Why now is this committee being asked to do something it's never been asked to do in the history of this committee, which is audit a county board of education? And while considering that, please keep in mind that we're asking the auditor not only to second guess the decisions of an elected body for which they're immune, but also we're asking the auditor to second guess multiple rulings by the court and our own state board of education and for issues that this statute has lapsed years ago.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 30 seconds. Thank you.

ROLEN: That's it.

[Video ends]

WILLIAMS: Good job.

ROLEN: So. Thank you. The audit committee eventually got enough votes to approve the audit after the hearing was concluded and we were disappointed, but we are going to fully cooperate with the audit. And to that end, we're going to ask the board's permission to set up space on the board's update page to provide information to the public, to the auditor, to the media, fully transparent. We're here asking for that. So, I don't know that you need to make a motion. Just consensus would be fine and we'll activate that.

SHAW: It'll just be a page on our website, just a page of information for the audit.

ROLEN: It is subheading on the board's update website. That's how it's configured. It could be configured or they could put a tab on.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, my support for that.

BARKE: Yeah, mine as well.

VALDES: Sure.

SHAW: Absolutely.

ROLEN: Dr. Sparks.

BARKE: That was yes.

ROLEN: That was yes?

BARKE: Yeah. She's lip-syncing.

ROLEN: A Godzilla movie.

SHAW: Do you have any idea what the staff time that's going to be involved in this?

ROLEN: The auditor...

VALDES: He said 4,000 hours.

ROLEN: 4,200 hours.

SHAW: On their side. But for our staff.

ROLEN: The auditor has predicted it'd be necessary to audit you five.

SHAW: 4,200 man work hours for the auditor's side.

ROLEN: Right.

SHAW: But it's probably hard to quantify how much our staff here would have to spend to comply or, I mean, we don't know.

ROLEN: The deputy superintendent and I hypothesized that it's going to take over our life somewhat. Yeah. Well, thank you. This will make it easy to do one stop shopping for the public, for the media, and for the auditor.

BARKE: Yeah, I love that, that we can just refer them to the website. Thank you. I think it's an excellent suggestion. And thank the two of you for the interruption you will have in your daily work schedule.

ROLEN: Large portion of my one precious life.

SHAW: Have you heard from them yet at all? Have we heard from them outside of that hearing?

ROLEN: No.

SHAW: Okay.

BARKE: Well, we're high priority. We're doing so many evil things here. They better get here right away to see what's going on.

ROLEN: That's the end of the presentation.

BARKE: Okay. Well, thank you. Appreciate that. And please just keep us posted. I know you will, and we look forward to hearing more.

ROLEN: All right. Thank you.

BARKE: Or we don't. I'm not sure. Mr. Giordano, I think you're up next.

GIORDANO: I think I'm going the wrong way. There we go. Thank you. All right. Well, thank you. And good evening, President Barke, Members of the Board. Tonight I want to provide just a really brief update on the Department's proposed retiree healthcare or what's commonly referred to as gap coverage benefits for our long-tenured OCDE Department employees. As you might be aware, the Department has not historically provided a retiree healthcare benefit coverage for those long-tenured employees. In contrast though, when you compare ourselves to other Orange County school districts here in Orange County, as well as a number of different county offices across the state of California, most of those agencies do provide those retiree healthcare benefit coverage, and it does provide somewhat of a competitive advantage for those agencies during the recruitment process. Here's a look at the topics we're going to cover tonight. First, I want to provide just a brief overview of the proposed retiree healthcare benefit plan, and then discuss some of the program's eligibility requirements.

Next, we're going to review an actual analysis of the expected long-term costs that are associated with the plan, and then review some of the funding options that were presented by our actuary that will sort of set aside some of those ideas on how we can fund this plan moving forward. So effective on July 1st of 2026, the plan would establish an employer paid annual contribution capped in the amount of \$10,000 that may be used by the right retiree toward employer paid healthcare coverage for a maximum of five years or age 65, whichever occurs first. The annual employer contribution would be adjusted each plan year, and this would be based on the state funded statutory cost of living adjustment up to a maximum of 4% per year. This contribution can only be used by the retiree to pay for the retiree's healthcare premiums. Of course, the retiree will be responsible for any healthcare premiums in excess of the annual employer contribution, and that's based on the plan that would be selected by the retiree.

You'll note that any premiums of eligible dependents enrolled in a healthcare plan must be paid in full by the retiree. So to be eligible for the gap coverage benefit plan, employees must be at least 55 years of age and then retire from either the CalSTRS or the CalPERS pension systems provided that the employee served a minimum of 10 years of consecutive service with the Orange County Department of Education prior to retirement or served a minimum of 25 years in public education prior to retirement with at least five years of service with the Orange County Department of Ed. And so based on the governmental accounting standard board, also known as GASB, retiree healthcare benefits are classified as an other post-employment benefit, also known as OPEB. And so GASB statement number 75 governs the accounting and financial reporting for post-employment benefits other than pensions, and it requires public agencies to report the long-term costs associated with any OPEB related plans. The statement also requires a full actual evaluation of the plan every two years, and this is to estimate the total OPEB liability, and then this report must be updated annually based on what they call a roll forward calculation, which is really just a streamlined version of the entire valuation report.

As a result, we did engage the services of an actuary to determine the total estimated OPEB liability, which is estimated at \$20.7 million. The annual service cost, which represents the expected increase in the total liability each year as the employees earn the benefit is estimated

range between \$1.4 million and \$2.1 million annually each of the next 20 years. Here's a look at some of the potential funding options that were shared by our actuary. You'll note these are just a few of the many different options that we could take a look at in terms of funding some of those long-term costs. One way to fund the plan would be to make level contributions of \$3.1 million annually each of the next 20 years. Another option would be to make a single contribution in the first year in the amount of \$22.3 million. This would cover the total OPEB liability and then the first-year annual service payment cost, and the Department would need to make additional annual service payments costs of approximately \$1.4 million to \$2.1 million annually over the remaining 19 years. And then the third option which is what staff is recommending would be to make a single contribution in the first year of \$46.5 million, and this would cover the total OPEB liability and then cover the annual service payment costs for the next 20 years.

Fortunately, the Department already set aside approximately \$30 million in a special reserve fund, fund number 17, which could be earmarked to cover these long-term liabilities. Additionally, with the Department's very healthy, unrestricted general fund reserve position, we would recommend that third funding option, and it would require that transfer of about \$16.5 million in unrestricted general fund reserves to fund 17. And again, that would be enough to fully fund that estimated OPEB liability and then cover those annual service payment costs for the next 20 years. And so that is a staff's recommendation, but I do want it to open up to questions for the board.

WILLIAMS: I got a question. So, this would be taken out of the fund in the next budget year, '26-'27, or this year?

GIORDANO: Yeah. It's a great question. This would become, if the board approved this this evening, it'd become effective July 1st. What we would recommend is with our estimated actuals that we present to the board in June, we would update the estimated actuals. We would actually book that transfer in the current year, that \$16.5 million.

WILLIAMS: Okay. The transfer occurs in '26, but it's going to be in the budget we approved in June?

GIORDANO: And then it will be budgeted then moving forward, yes. In the new year, '26-'27.

WILLIAMS: Okay. We're taking funds out of the '25-'26.

GIORDANO: We're doing the transfer, the actual transfer of the \$16.5 million in reserves in '25-'26, so that would occur. So those monies would be moved over and they would be budgeted in the '26-'27 year in that fund 17.

SHAW: Well, I'm a member of CalSTRS and I'm a 2% at 60. I'm trying to get my...

VALDES: Do you qualify?

SHAW: I'm not going to qualify. No. I'm just curious, when do most of our people retire? Is it 60 or...

GIORDANO: It's a great question.

SHAW: Is it all over the place? You don't like that question, Renee?

HENDRICK: Is your question, when do they retire or when are they eligible to retire?

SHAW: When do they actually retire? That was...

GIORDANO: The actuary had to take a look at that when they prepared these numbers for us. The actual numbers were 60, I believe it's 62 years old is the average retirement age for a classified school employee and 61 years of age for a certificated employee, so CalSTRS.

SHAW: I was wondering about that because it said 55 is eligible, but I bet most of our people go past 55, right?

HENDRICK: We have some employees that are, we have a couple that are 80 something. We have a couple that are 70 something, so they're way past.

SHAW: Yeah.

BARKE: Okay. Any other questions? Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: No questions.

BARKE: Well, I being kind of conservative, I like the idea of getting it paid upfront and that's your recommendation. You guys are the experts. The fact that I like it and you like it, I'd love to make the motion to go with option number three. Your option is, would anybody like to second that motion?

WILLIAMS: I'll second it.

BARKE: Awesome. All right. And Dr. Williams is seconding it. Oh, I'm sorry. Dr. Sparks, did you have any comments or questions?

SPARKS: Yeah. Well, I just think this is really important to fill this gap and seems like our reserves are healthy enough that we can do this. I would say not without a problem, we need to certainly watch still the enrollment numbers and so forth. But I think if it seems like this is something we can do and as such, I really believe it's something that's very, very important to provide this gap coverage for so many employees that have been working so hard for all these years.

GIORDANO: Thank you.

BARKE: Okay. I guess you're okay with our first and second then?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: Excellent. Okay. I think we're ready to vote.

SISAVATH: Okay. Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Yes.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: And I do agree with Lisa. I think it's great that we're able to provide this benefit because I think it's good for our employees for morale and just to keep them competitive now and going forward. I think it's a great plan. Okay. And you are up for the next item as well, I believe, if I remember correctly here. Do you want to move on to number 25?

GIORDANO: Perfect. Okay. All right. Well, thank you for allowing the superintendent to conduct this public hearing. This is for public input on the California School Employees Association's proposal to the superintendent, and this is for the '26-'27 school year. At this time, I'd like to just hand out copies of that proposal.

BARKE: Thank you.

GIORDANO: All right. At this time, I'd like to open the public hearing and ask Ms. Hendrick if we have any public comment cards regarding this item.

HENDRICK: I have none.

GIORDANO: Okay. Hearing no public comments, this hearing is now closed. All right.

BARKE: Okay, wonderful. We'll move on to 26 now. Thank you.

GIORDANO: Okay. All right. Again, I want to thank you for allowing the superintendent to conduct this public hearing. And this is for public input on the superintendent's proposal to the California School Employees Association for the '26-'27 school year. And again, let me hand out that proposal.

BARKE: Thank you.

GIORDANO: All right. At this time, again, I'd like to open the public hearing and ask Ms. Hendrick if we have any public comment cards regarding this item.

HENDRICK: We have none.

GIORDANO: Okay. Hearing no public comments, this hearing is also closed. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you. All right. We are moving along now to information items.

HENDRICK: Sorry, I broke my microphone.

BARKE: No, you're fine.

HENDRICK: The first information I may have is just our quarterly update. If there are any salary increases over \$10,000 for a year, you'll see four of them listed. They were all for promotional opportunities, moving from a lower-level position to the next. When you do that over a 12-month period, that was the increased cost for those four positions. And then I think Dr. Bean.

BEAN: All right. I'm up. I think they're going to put it up. Well, it's been a long evening, so I'll go through this real quickly. Wanted to celebrate the fact that we had put on an Orange County State of Education, and I know that Mari was there.

BARKE: It was amazing.

BEAN: Amazing. We had nearly 500 participants from across the county, including educators, nonprofits, businesses, public officials, all gathered together to really join into the theme of the day. And that was that no one gets there alone, right? So, Adan kicked us off. I don't know if you guys watched *Love on the Spectrum*. He did a great job, really inspiring us.

BARKE: Yeah, he was great.

BEAN: And then I shared a lot of data and what it means for us as a county and education. It was a well-attended. Next year, our goal is to double the attendance and have all you guys there and have more public officials there.

BARKE: The feedback from it was amazing. It was just an amazing event. I mean, you had the who's who of Orange County there. You had from Congress to DAs to sheriff to, I think every district was there represented and they were enforced. They had several members from superintendents to trustees and it was really well represented and it was a great, great event.

BEAN: Yeah. We celebrated our districts at the event as well.

BARKE: Yeah. I think you made everyone really feel included and part of the team, which was nice.

BEAN: Yeah. Thank you. All right. So just some review of the 5-3-1. We'll in particular look at district and charter school leadership. We would proudly announce that Orange County is adding 42 California distinguished schools on the list. It's a very high number for counties across the state. And some of our districts even had the highest in terms of the number of schools, high schools. So again, this is the alternate year, so this was for high schools. Secondary. Next year will be for elementary. And here the lists raise them all, but it's on our website. We're really, really proud of our districts and our schools across our county. And we have, I believe, Orange County State of Ed, I said we have about 651 schools. 43 out of those schools received this. It's pretty amazing. And then in the area of instructional literacy, we did want to share with you that we just put on a national history day that was well attended. Approximately 43 schools from Orange County participated in this annual event that we host and we look forward to seeing how the teams place in California and national competition in terms of National History Day. We're very well attended by our students across Orange County. And then I want to share a little bit about what's happening in CTE. We've got two pieces of legislation. One is with Senator Choi. We are co-authoring a bill called SB 1222. It passed, I guess, a committee today, 6-0.

It's doing very well. And basically, what this bill does is that it authorizes the California Department of Education to name one county to support and become the state lead agency to support other county offices around career technical education. And we're hoping that we would be recognized as that county, although I don't know, but hopefully we would be given that our county is only county doing CTE in different ways. It was recognized at a state level, Governor Newsom, and so Choi wanted to highlight that and put our county on the map. A lot of good momentum on that one, especially around our OC pathways program that we've been doing. And then we're working with Congressman Lou Correa, which is in progress around federal workforce funding opportunity, in which hopefully there'd be a federal investment. He actually, it was after the state of education address that he approached me after hearing the state of education, he said, "I want to put some money into the work that you're doing here." We're going to work with him and hopefully we requested \$2 million, so hopefully he can make that happen at a federal level and invest in our OC pathways and workforce pipeline, serving over 450,000 students. It would serve Central Orange County and 28 districts and aligned to of course registered apprenticeship, workplace learning and CTE. In particular, focusing on the most vulnerable students. I thought that was a really great engagement and he approached us after the state of education, so it was fantastic.

BARKE: I know he was very impressed with the state of education. I spoke to him at lunch and he was very impressed with the event.

BEAN: Yeah. And he was so just happy that his son and Adan gave the key note. I thought that was fantastic. And that is an update on some of the things that we're doing.

BARKE: Great.

HENDRICK: All right. We just have a few items. Let's see. The next board meeting is Wednesday, May 6th. That is our meeting for the budget study session. My question for the board is, in the past we've started that at four o'clock, an hour before the board meeting. Is that, would you like to do that same thing? And depending on if we have any district appeals, we could look at doing that. We'll plan for the four and then we'll see how that goes. For that board

meeting, this mission deadline is April 22nd and the board packet delivery is Friday, May 1st. The other thing I have is the Memorial Day contest. We are getting those ready. Do any of the board members, would they like to evaluate the essays or do you want us to send you the top 10 or whatever, or what would you like?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, that's what you've done in the past.

HENDRICK: I think we sent you like the top, the handful of the top, right? We'd like to continue and send it to all board members or?

WILLIAMS: I'll do it.

HENDRICK: Okay.

BARKE: I'm going to pass. I have a very heavy workload, so if there are other board members that are willing and able, I will take a pass.

HENDRICK: Okay. So, Dr. Williams, we'll be sending you those. I'm not seeing a lot of input there.

SHAW: Ken raised his hand. That's great.

WILLIAMS: You miss out because there's...

SHAW: I enjoy reading them, but I don't want to evaluate this one over that one. It's too much. Okay.

WILLIAMS: It is hard.

HENDRICK: We will make sure you get copies of all the winners and stuff like that so you can see that. I'm also very excited to say that we were able to collaboratively come to an agreement with our teachers' association and so we have ratified their settlement and so that was a two-year settlement. So that is for the '25-'26 year and the '26-'27 year also. Wonderful. We're glad that that's been concluded and that is all I have to report.

BARKE: Thank you. Terrific. Legislative updates, I think we covered them. Are there any more that we want to cover? Okay. Between Dr. Bean's and Mr. Rolen, I think we're up to speed on that. Committee report, any committee reports?

HENDRICK: Dr. Williams, you had had a clip you wanted shown this time.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. I don't know if we're there yet. That was going to be under board member comments.

BARKE: Oh, okay. Well, I think that we're there. Unless there's a committee report, we can go right into board member comments.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Being that there's none, may I continue?

BARKE: Yes, please.

WILLIAMS: I'm going to speak out against State Senator Tom Umberg in his motivation to audit this board. And let's speak to the truth that this is politically driven. For the record, it started in 2022 when David Min introduced Senate Bill 2086, and that was eventually defeated. The next year, 2024, we had Josh Newman introduce Senate Bill 907. And then of course, this last year in 2025, Senator Tom Umberg introduced basically the same type of legislation in Sacramento to dilute and negatively impact what we do here on this board. And that was Senate Bill 249. The fourth, almost four years in a row now, this board is being undermined by Sacramento politicians with ultimate goal of hurting what we do. And I think if there's a video that we're going to be playing, I think that summarizes, and just give me a few seconds before that's playing, but I think that summarizes very well, excuse me, Assembly Member Joshua...

BARKE: Hoover.

WILLIAMS: Hoover, I think summed it up quite correctly. By the way, Greg, that was a wonderful five minutes that you spent telling the truth up there in Sacramento. I thought that was a marvelous job.

BARKE: Two minutes? Was it two?

ROLEN: It was about two or three minutes. Truth goes a long way.

BARKE: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: But I thought that was very well done. I want to thank all of the previous public comments, those in the grassroots who came out to support us. That was sincerely appreciated. We appreciate all the press. Hopefully we'll get more attention to this because Senator Tom Umberg is running for the state board of equalization. He's voting for anywhere from \$400 to \$500,000 to invest in an audit on a board that is very transparent that does everything openly like we've done tonight with complaints that there are no complaints or issues out there. This is his way to get the CTA's endorsement statewide as he runs for the state board of equalization. So, I don't have any against against Tom. He's been a good moderate Democrat for the past several decades, both when he served in the assembly, then moving on to the Senate. He served our country valiantly as a colonel, I think in the army. He's done pretty good except he's taken a different change in tact and direction because I think he has greater political ambition. With that, thank you for putting up with me. This is one of those issues that has been irritant, but I think the truth needs to be told. On that note, if we can have that video played, that would be wonderful.

[Video plays]

ASSEMBLY MEMBER HOOVER: I have that all day, but that is exactly what is happening here. This appears to me as a very clear, first of all, it is terrible precedent. Second of all, it is a very clear weaponization of this committee for political purposes. There's no doubt of that. We can deny that all day, but that is exactly what is happening here. I think my first question would

be for the auditor is, how many audits has your office, obviously not necessarily you as auditor, but your office in the history of the state auditor audited a county board of education. I'm actually just curious for the record, just because I don't know the answer.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And to be honest, I can't think off the top of my head what that number is, but if we have, I would imagine it's very small.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER HOOVER: Have there been any during your time as auditor? I guess that would be a...

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER HOOVER: Okay. Thank you. And it would be interesting to get that information obviously, but my guess is that the number would be very small and I think it really goes to show that the type of precedent that we would be setting with this audit. What has been described today by the proponents of this audit has essentially been what goes on at every single county board of education in the entire state, every single month, at every single hearing, which is using outside counsel, not something that's against the law, not something that is problematic. It's something that every school district in the state of California does. Approving charter school applications, that is quite literally one of the main roles of a county board of education in state law. Going against a staff recommendation to approve a charter school. This happens every single month in California because very often the staff of an education board is very anti-charter while the board members are very pro-charter.

So, the idea that somehow overruling an administrative staff decision is somehow problematic is not evidence of wrongdoing. There are no legal concerns that have been raised. And Senator, I want to ask you a question because you're raising concerns about the amount that the Board of Education is suing the state. Do you know how many lawsuits that Attorney General Rob Bonta has filed against the President of the United States in just this term of the Trump presidency?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't know.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER HOOVER: Yes. Well, the answer is 44 lawsuits at a cost of, I believe this legislature actually passed a bill creating a pot of money for about \$50 million that I don't know the voting record on that bill. I would expect that many of the people in this room supported that, supported taxpayer dollars going to sue the federal administration. I think the question is, is that when there is disagreement, it is often appropriate to take legal action. And it was interesting in the facts that you read on the seven lawsuits that have been cited, it's just amazing to me sort of some of the examples that you used. Suing the state government for the longest school shutdowns in the entire country that in retrospect, we now have evidence were detrimental to the outcomes and the health of our children. That is a lawsuit that they absolutely were right to bring forward.

Suing over a mask mandate that went on longer than any other mask mandate in the entire country. I was on a board of education during the pandemic. I as a board member could sit in my board of education chambers and not wear a mask. Well, every student in every classroom in my district had to continue to mask. And then the Supreme Court just recently ruled in favor of a

lawsuit that came out of California that supported parental rights. So, I think one of the really frustrating things to me is a lot of these lawsuits that you mentioned as evidence here actually were the right thing to do. And finally, to the point, as my colleague brought up about this not being about politics, I think it's absolutely clear that this is about nothing but politics. That's why we've had this history of bills that have been directed exactly at this board of education for the last few years that have been unsuccessful. This is now just the latest attempt to simply silence a board of education that some members of this legislature disagree with. I think it's terrible precedent. I think we absolutely are weaponizing the audit committee with this, and I would encourage my colleagues to vote no.

[Video ends]

WILLIAMS: I think that sums it up well. Thank you, Joshua.

BARKE: Yes. Thank you for sharing. Josh does a very nice job. He is a former, I think he mentioned that he's a former school board member from, I believe, Folsom. He's former chief of staff to Kevin Kiley. He is very well versed and I did enjoy his commentary. Any other board member comments before we close?

VALDES: Yes, I have some.

BARKE: Okay.

VALDES: And there's a picture that I wanted to have posted up there. Okay. So first off, before I get to the picture, last month, I responded to a public comment by Lori, an ACCESS school teacher, and I asked her, she made some statements during the public comments about the Department not providing sufficient transportation for kids, and she had an issue with some laptops that she had, and I invited her in the meeting last month to send me an email detailing her concerns, and she's not in the room tonight, but I invite Lori to send me that email. I have not received it, so if she hasn't gotten a response, it's because I haven't gotten the email. I'm hoping to hear from her. She made some statements that I thought were serious enough for me to ask for the email, so I'm waiting for that. Generally, I don't give too much oxygen to our detractors.

I know where, just speaking for myself, I know where my heart is at. I am here to support kids and parents in Orange County, but I saw this come across my emails and I felt it was important enough to make a public statement about it. I'm particularly talking about a group called Contemporary Policies Institute, Public School Defenders Hub, who is sending around this email, I guess, to their supporters with our picture on it and making all kinds of allegations. And I want to speak directly to them tonight. Hopefully I will hear from them, and I'm going to parse this meme that they have created. "Orange County Board of Education Trustees continue promoting and approving countywide privatized schools to receive tax dollars that do not comply with state standards." To whomever wrote this meme, I would like to know as one of the five members of the Board of Education, what state standards are you talking about?

What charter schools do not comply with state standards? So please give me a list and please give me the standards that you are referring to. "Under the misleading term, school choice, unqualified charter programs, cherry pick students..." This is a very serious allegation because

it's clearly against the law. The charter schools cannot cherry pick students, so to ever person who wrote this, please tell me what evidence you have that any charter that this county board is approving is cherry picking students, because if you send me that evidence, I will do something about it. I will investigate it. "...Leaving the most vulnerable children out..." And I take a particular umbrage with that statement that we're leaving vulnerable children out, presumably of the charter schools. I walked hundreds, if not thousands, of homes in Santa Ana and Anaheim. I've been to people's homes with multiple families living in them without internet.

Several people invited me into their house to have a coffee or whatever, and they were telling me that their kids go to the charter schools and that it's probably been the most important thing in their lives. For someone to just blatantly just say that we're leaving the vulnerable children out, quite frankly, that I represent in area one, I represent two areas of clearly disadvantaged kids. I take particular umbrage with that statement and I'd like to know what you're talking about. I invite you to send me correspondence telling me how this board is leaving the most vulnerable children in Orange County out of the process of our education system. And then it goes on, "...Closing doors with no plans for students to continue their education." I'm guessing you're referring to the one charter school that we closed last year, and I can tell you right now publicly that while that process was going on, I specifically called Dr. Bean and had a very lengthy conversation.

I'm not sure if Greg was part of that conversation. And I said, "If we're going to close this school and it looks like this is going down that path, we need to call every family who has a student at that school and make sure that we are providing whatever support we can to help them land in a different place. We do not want them to just figure it out". To the contrary of that statement, we did just the opposite and I think we spent months calling families and making sure that they landed in the best place possible. Did we not, Deputy Superintendent Hendrick?

HENDRICK: Yes. We gave resources to the school and stuff. Yes.

VALDES: "The academic advantages they claim are often religious in nature." No, they're not. Okay? I'm not aware of any charter school that...

BARKE: It's illegal.

VALDES: It's patently illegal. Maybe we have some charter operators that have a religious background, but it's not funneling into the curriculum, at least not that I'm aware. They're pushing specific virtues and values. "...Public education exists to be non-religious." Yes, thank you. I know that. "...ensuring all children are included." Thank you. I know that. "We demand the OC Board of Education and County leadership stop the deception and self-interest..." I don't know what self-interest you're talking about that is driving approval of privatized program that weaken our local schools. So, to whomever is at the Contemporary Policy Institute, Public School Defenders Hub, I await your response to my public comment.

BARKE: And I apologize because I actually received that via mail, snail mail, with a list of signatures. I can tell you who's in that group had I brought it with me and I will bring it or I'll send you copies. I did not know a lot of the signatures, but I did recognize Chris Erickson and I did recognize Jeff Cole as signers of that. There's about six pages attached of signers. I will,

maybe I'll send it to you, Renee, and you can distribute it. Does that you and Greg? Yeah. Yeah, I'll scan it and send it to you. I'm sorry. I meant to bring that with me tonight. I can tell you who they are, at least who some of the signers are. I guess I'm the only one who got the snail mail because I think they're all original signatures. And you guys sent it to me. It came here with no return address and you guys forwarded it to me and that's who it was.

HENDRICK: Yeah. We received, I think, 17 or something, just addressed to the board. We opened those. They all had an individual signature, form letter though, hardly. They're almost all the same, but they only have one signature, so that was different then.

BARKE: Yeah.

HENDRICK: So again, just if mail comes directly in your name, we will send that directly to you. Thank you. We don't open those. It's just if it's blankly to the point.

BARKE: Yeah. I meant to bring it back, so I'll get it back to you.

SHAW: Do you want to call Lisa?

BARKE: Lisa, anything to report as a board member other than you're exhausted?

SPARKS: Well, the sun is coming up here, so it might be time for me to get a little bit of sleep. But I just wanted to say that I also attended Dr. Bean's state of education, and he just rocked it. It really just knocked it out of the park. And I had a lot of people coming up to me afterwards as well. Just thought it was a fantastic idea, fantastic way to get your message out of all the wonderful things you're doing with your 5-3-1 plan and everything else. And I look forward to that growing. I mean, it was already just booked out, but it's going to grow even more because people were very charged up about it and enthused, and I think it was just a brilliant idea. I'm glad it went really well. And yeah, I think I'm just going to sign off here real soon.

BARKE: Well, sleep well and enjoy the rest of your adventure. We appreciate you being here.

SPARKS: Thank you.

BARKE: Dr. Bean going back to that event, I did have one constituent, I think when I posted the event and say, "How would I have found out about it? "

BEAN: Great question. Yeah. I mean, we have through OCDE Newsroom and all of our contacts with the county, we have a mailing list of literally hundreds and thousands of people that we've sent it out to. We also marketed through OCDE Newsroom, websites, personally made calls, so unless they're not on any kind of mailing list.

BARKE: Yeah. And I reached out to Ian and he did give me the link that they could sign up for OCDE Newsroom that was my response to them.

BEAN: Yeah.

BARKE: Okay.

BEAN: Unfortunately, we couldn't send it to all of Orange County.

BARKE: Of course.

BEAN: 3.5 million, but yeah.

BARKE: But it was only one person, and now hopefully they'll subscribe and be happy.

BEAN: There we go.

BARKE: All right. If there's no other, oh...

SHAW: Yeah I'll just add real quickly. I wanted to thank everybody who's been defending our board from the critics and Greg and Tom Sheehy did an admirable job in Sacramento. I was particularly interested in looking at that letter. Just this evening, we were talking to TLC who reported they have 24% of their students on an IEP and were being accused of having charter schools that cherry pick students. It's the so parallel universe time. For those who don't know an IEP, individual education plan, it's for usually special needs students. A kid with autism or down syndrome or something is on an IEP. The idea that they're cherry-picking students, it's pretty laughable. I often hear the critics of our board will say, we'll bring up the lawsuits we've been involved in. I've been on the board since 2020.

I would point out to any reporters or people who might be writing about our board. Many of the lawsuits that we were involved in, our representation was pro bono. We didn't use five cents of taxpayer money to hire a lawyer to defend it. And often we were joining in with other organizations or something that were already in existing litigation, but we added our name to the lawsuit kind of thing. But in instances where we did use taxpayer money to hire an outside counsel, they were involved. And when we were involved in lawsuits, we won the lawsuits. So, it's kind of hard to criticize our board of wasting taxpayer money when we obviously had a legitimate legal situation on our hands. For example, the picking of our general counsel, Mr. Rolen, our board wanted to pick its own...

BARKE: Or have a say in it.

SHAW: Imagine that, or have a say in it. Or at least have a say in picking our own lawyer. Now, doesn't anyone find it pretty common sense? You get to pick your own lawyer. I think that to me, that was a very common-sense position we were taking at the time. And I realized we had a difference of opinion at the time, but ultimately, we got to pick Mr. Rolen as our general counsel. I find our critics are often profoundly misinformed when they're bringing up the lawsuits. The dollar amounts being used are just wildly inaccurate as far as how much we're spent on outside counsel and things. They're adding in every legal bill that flows through this building, but that's obviously not the correct way of looking at it. It's just very unfortunate. As one of my favorite sayings is people are entitled to their own opinion. They're not entitled to their own facts.

BARKE: I love that.

SHAW: I love that saying and it's very—if I could share one thing of Shaw Family news, my oldest son, since we met last, my oldest son did get his mission assignment. He's going to be living for two years in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and as a missionary for our church, learning Hmong, which I did not expect. We were pretty surprised at if you guys know this language. It's H M O N G. The H is silent. It's Hmong. It's kind of from South China areas. He's already starting to learn that language. Luke will be shoving off this summer for the Minneapolis Minnesota mission.

BARKE: Congratulations. All right. Any other...

SPARKS: There's a Grey's Anatomy episode about the Hmong culture and how they interact with the medical system.

SHAW: Oh, okay. I'll look for that.

SPARKS: He should watch that.

BARKE: Anything else before we end this lovely meeting? Hearing nothing, we are adjourned.