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California State Senate

SENATOR
THOMAS J. UMBERG

THIRTY-FOURTH SENATE DISTRICT



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March 3, 2026

Assemblymember John Harabedian
Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

REVISED 3/3/2026

Re: Request for Audit of Orange County Board of Education (OCBE)

Dear Chair Harabedian,

I respectfully request that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee approve an audit of the Orange County Board of Education (OCBE). This request is based on a pattern of governance disputes, litigation activity, and policy actions over recent years that raise significant questions regarding transparency, fiscal stewardship, civil rights compliance, and adherence to statutory responsibilities. The purpose of this non-partisan request is to ensure that OCBE's governance, decision-making, and policy actions align with California law, federal requirements, and best practices in public administration.

OCBE has been directly involved in multiple lawsuits related to its policy decisions, appointments, and governance actions, including litigation concerning parental notification laws, charter school approvals, and allegations of procedural violations in board operations. These issues highlight recurring legal risks and fiscal exposure associated with OCBE's policy choices and oversight responsibilities. Additionally, OCBE is statutorily responsible under California law for hiring and overseeing the County Superintendent of Schools and for supervising certain aspects of fiscal and operational governance affecting local school districts. This role requires strong internal controls, transparency, and adherence to state and federal requirements.

OCBE's litigation history, governance disputes, and broad oversight responsibilities provide a reasonable and documented basis for an audit to assess compliance with California law, federal standards, and best practices in public administration, including transparency, fiscal management, and civil-rights-related procedures.

I am requesting an examination of the following:

1. Review the actions and activities of OCBE over the past five years and for a selection of those actions and activities perform the following:
 - a. Assess whether OCBE's governance and policy decisions comply with applicable federal and state civil-rights laws, including Title VI, Title IX, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and related nondiscrimination requirements.
 - b. Determine whether the board adhered to applicable laws and regulations, including the Ralph M. Brown Act, Public Records Act, Political Reform Act, and other transparency requirements.

- c. Assess the impact on student outcomes, complaint handling, and any disparate impacts affecting protected student populations.
2. Assess whether OCBE's use of public resources and administration of policies, programs, and expenditures complied with applicable laws, grant requirements, and program assurances, and whether such activities were free from improper political or ideological influence beyond the Board's statutory authority.
3. Review OCBE's litigation activity over the past several years, including the authorization, purpose, and cost of lawsuits and settlements. Evaluate whether litigation decisions were fiscally prudent, aligned with the Board's governance responsibilities, and supported by adequate cost-benefit analysis and oversight, including assessing the legality of selecting legal counsel pursuant to state statutes and other laws.
4. Review OCBE's charter school approval and oversight processes and perform the following:
 - a. Determine whether the board's authorizing processes for charter schools meet legal requirements and are rigorous enough to ensure the likely success of the charter schools they authorized.
 - b. Assess whether the board's oversight and monitoring of the financial information for charter schools are adequate and meet state requirements and best practices.
 - c. Evaluate the adequacy of the academic oversight performed by the board of charter schools.
5. Assess whether OCBE's contracting and procurement practices comply with applicable laws, regulations and best practices relating to competitive bidding, conflict of interest and internal controls, particularly for professional services, legal counsel, and consulting contracts. This includes an examination of vendor selection, deliverables, and oversight.
6. Review OCBE's handling of employee complaints, retaliation allegations, and whistleblower disclosures to determine compliance with state whistleblower protection laws and whether internal reporting mechanisms function effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this request. Please email Mufida Assaf (Mufida.Assaf@sen.ca.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Thomas Umberg
34th Senate District