



News Release

## San Diego Unified Board Approves Multi-Agency Task Force to Improve Regional Cooperation for the Protection of Students

**SAN DIEGO** (Sept. 27, 2019) – The San Diego Unified Board of Education is pleased to announce the creation of a task force with representatives from the District Attorney’s Office, the City Attorney, the San Diego Police Department, and various governmental and community organizations, to improve interagency collaboration for the protection of children from sexual harassment and abuse. San Diego Unified Police Chief Michael Marquez will serve as chair of the new group, with plans to start work immediately.

“As the second-largest school district in California, we have a vital interest in protecting young people from harassment and abuse,” said Trustee Richard Barrera, who sponsored the resolution creating the new task force. “This initiative to enhance the cooperation among public agencies and community organizations will only serve to benefit everyone involved.” Barrera will serve on the new task force along with Board Vice President John Lee Evans.

The goal of the new task force will be to identify potential areas for improvement regarding collaboration between the various agencies working to protect children from sexual harassment and abuse. Among those organizations and individuals who have committed to participate are the following:

- Dr. Abby Brewer-Johnson, Chair, San Diego Psychological Association Child, Family and Youth Committee
- Mara Elliott, Office of the City Attorney
- Captain Rich Freedman, San Diego Police Department
- Rickeena Boyd-Kamei, San Diego Education Association member
- Loxie Gant, parent/advocate
- Kimberly Giardina, Acting Director, San Diego County Child Welfare Services
- Dr. Rebecca Mendiola, San Diego County Office of Education Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
- Bryce Benavente Pablo-Cook, Student, School of Creative and Performing Arts

- Derby Pattengill, parent/advocate
- Dr. Jolie Pickett, Administrators Association San Diego President
- Tracy Prior, Deputy District Attorney, Office of the County District Attorney
- Jay Sieber, Student, San Diego High School
- Dr. Suzanne Starling, Medical Director, Chadwick Center for Children and Families, Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego and Clinical Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UCSD School of Medicine
- Mahogany Taylor, parent/advocate
- Charles Wilson, Senior Director, Chadwick Center for Children and Families, Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego

A parent-advocate member of the new task force, Loxie Gant, shared her commitment to the group's vital work. She said, "As a parent, child safety in schools is of the utmost importance to me. The task force will help fill the gap among regional partners to better protect our students."

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