

July 23, 2020

Long Beach Unified School District
Board of Education
1515 Hughes Way
Long Beach, CA 90810

Dear Members of the Long Beach Board of Education:

We, the parents, community members, educators, elected representatives and non-profit leaders, write to urge the LBUSD Board of Education to represent and support the Long Beach Latinx Community.

It is important our Latinx community has strong representation and a voice in setting policy that affects our students, many of whom are Latinx. Your actions impact the lives of our students, teachers, and families every single day.

We are incredibly disappointed and disheartened that Dr. Juan Benitez was passed over to serve as President of the LBUSD Board of Education. Dr. Benitez was serving as Vice President and was nominated to serve as President, as is tradition. That nomination did not receive a second and was not taken to a vote. The Board traditionally rotates and the Vice President becomes the President after a year of service. Dr. Benitez would be a great voice for the Long Beach community as President.

Dr. Benitez is a respected scholar and historian at California State University, Long Beach. He is both faculty and Director of the Center for Community Engagement. Dr. Benitez is immensely qualified and is an academic leader on issues of racial equity and justice. During his tenure on the Board of Education, he has lifted the voices and experiences of students of color and low-income parents.

Passing over Dr. Benitez is unacceptable and disrespectful, not only to a sitting elected member, but to the entire Long Beach Latinx community.

Long Beach Unified is California's third-largest school district and our city's largest employer. Latinx students are nearly 60% of the entire LBUSD population and the Latinx community represents 43% of the city's population. We need Latinx representation on the numerous LBUSD budget and stakeholder groups. Our community must be heard.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in our educational infrastructure. More than ever, our Latinx students are facing significant challenges due to the digital divide, economic crisis, immigration status, and housing and food insecurities. Our Latinx students are in need of your support and your actions will have a long-lasting effect on their academic success and future career development.

We support our hardworking teachers and public schools. Still, we can't stand by as you marginalize Dr. Benitez and silence the Latinx voices in our Long Beach community. We expect a formal response to this letter.

Sincerely,

Robert Garcia, Mayor, City of Long Beach

Lena Gonzalez, Senator, State of California

Roberto Uranga, Councilmember, City of Long Beach

Mary Zendejas, Councilmember, City of Long Beach

Vivian Malauulu, President, Long Beach City College District Board of Trustees

Tonia Reyes-Uranga, Former Councilmember, City of Long Beach

Irma Archuleta, Former Trustee, Long Beach City College District Board of Trustees

Herlinda Chico, Field Deputy, Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn

Jessica Quintana, Executive Director, Centro CHA

Mario E. Gonzalez, President, Centro CHA Board of Directors

Henry Taboada, Former City Manager, City of Long Beach and Member, Centro CHA Board of Directors

Susana Gonzalez-Edmond, LBUSD Parent, and Long Beach Civil Service Commissioner

David Salazar, Member, Centro CHA Board of Directors

Ron Arias, Former Director of Health and Human Services, City of Long Beach

Phyllis Arias, Long Beach Civil Service Commissioner; and Retired Long Beach City College Faculty

Theresa J. Marino, Retired Employee, City of Long Beach; and Former Member, Centro CHA Board of Directors

Carmen O. Perez, Former Commissioner, Long Beach Harbor Commission

Eduardo Lara, Sociology Professor, California State University, Long Beach

Armando Vasquez-Ramos, Professor, California State University, Long Beach

Abigail Mejia, President, Long Beach Democratic Women's Study Club; and Member, Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition

Cesar Armendariz, Long Beach Community Organizer

Silissa Uriarte Smith, 360 Collaborative Solutions, Local Small Business Owner

Celine Cordero, Senior Vice President, EKA

Josh La Farga, Commissioner, Long Beach Planning Commission

Erick Verduzco-Vega, Business Owner and Commissioner, Long Beach Planning Commission

Peter Santillan, LiUNA Local 1309, Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer

Elvia Delgadillo, Retired Employee, City of Long Beach

Maricela de Rivera, CLEC and Director, Long Beach Breastfeeds

Milton Duena, Member, Long Beach Economic Development Commission

Hilda Gaytan, Puente Latino Association

Martha Cota, Latinos in Action & Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Elsa Olivares, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Susana Luviano, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Juana Castellanos, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Guillermina Cruz, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Liliana Espinoza, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Marlen Gutierrez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Maria Zamudio, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Maria Alvarez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Maria Gutierrez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Ermisenda Castellon, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Zaira Rodriguez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Teresa Hernandez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Digna Mendez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Iris Rodriguez, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Maria Guadalupe Almaraz, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)

Maria Guadalupe Corral, Sindicato de Padres Pro-Edu (LIA)