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Bakersfield Students Settle Lawsuit Over Summer School Cancellation and School Funding

Bakersfield City School District agrees to obtain stakeholder input and provide interpretation for school funding decisions to benefit high-needs students

Bakersfield, CA— Two students in the Bakersfield City School District have settled their lawsuit challenging the District’s cancellation of summer school in 2019.

The students had alleged that BCSD’s summer school cancellation violated the Local Control Funding Formula/Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCFF/LCAP)—California’s school funding framework—because the District made its summer school decision without seeking required input from parents or other stakeholders and without accounting for \$1.6 million in restricted funding that was originally earmarked for summer school.

“Because of this lawsuit and settlement, students and families in BCSD will have greater protections for their right to participate in school funding decisions during the next school funding LCAP cycle,” said Valentin Narvaez, the students’ attorney with Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance.

In the settlement, the District agreed to solicit required stakeholder input before it makes substantial changes to its LCAP in the future. Also, the District committed to greater transparency in the LCFF/LCAP information it shares with parents and

other stakeholder groups, including posting additional LCFF/LCAP information on the District's website.

The District also agreed to provide all LCAP information in both English and Spanish and to have a trained Spanish language interpreter at all public Board meetings related to the LCAP.

Jodie Smith of California Rural Legal Assistance said, "The District's commitment to provide Spanish-language translation and interpretation during the next LCAP process means more families can have their voices heard in decisions about how the district spends money it receives from the state."

The District has also committed to using state funding intended to benefit low-income, English Learner, and foster students to increase or improve educational services for those students.

"Dedicated funds from the state are supposed to be used to benefit some of our highest need students, especially students who are low-income, English Learners, or foster students. This settlement helps make sure those dollars reach the student they were intended to reach," said Deborah Escobedo of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights.

The settlement brings to a close the lawsuit that California Rural Legal Assistance Inc., Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights filed in April 2019 on behalf of both plaintiffs, who are students in Bakersfield City School District.

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California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) was founded in 1966 to be a world-class nonprofit law firm for those who cannot afford to pay a private attorney. Through 17 offices statewide, we provide free legal services and education to tens of thousands of low-income California residents each year and litigate cases that benefit even more people. We help our clients get fair pay for their hard work, find and stay in safe housing, access healthcare, ensure quality education for their kids, and more. Our vision is a rural California where all people are treated with dignity and respect and guaranteed their fundamental rights. For more information, please visit www.crla.org.

Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. (GBLA)

Founded in 1968, GBLA's mission is to promote social change and justice by providing high-quality legal services to the low-income community of Kern County, California. GBLA assists clients in the areas of housing and homelessness, domestic violence, guardianship, children and family services, health law, consumer law, and others. For more information on GBLA, please visit www.gbla.org.

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. (LCCR)

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, founded in 1968, works to advance, protect and promote the legal rights of communities of color, low-income persons, immigrants and refugees. Assisted by hundreds of pro bono attorneys, LCCR provides free legal assistance and representation to individuals on civil legal matters through direct services, impact litigation and policy advocacy. For more information, please visit www.lccrsf.org.