

Board/Commission Recommendation

Asian American Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

In Support of HRC's Recommendation on Race and Equity within AISD School Closures and Consolidations Plan

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2019, the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees approved (in 6-3 vote) a plan to close, consolidate and repurpose four elementary school campuses: Brooke Elementary School, Metz Elementary School, Pease Elementary School and Sims Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, Brooke E.S., Metz E.S., and Sims E.S. (3 out of the 4 schools that were approved for closure) are disproportionately placed in the city's historically segregated East Austin neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, nearly 95% of the students at each of the three aforementioned campuses identify as being either Hispanic and/or African-American students, and nearly 90% or more of the students at each of these campuses identify as being economically disadvantaged; and

WHEREAS, Austin ISD has previously closed historically Black and Hispanic schools (Old L.C. Anderson, Kealing Junior High School, Pearce Middle School, etc.) that have been identified as "bonding agents for the community"; and

WHEREAS, particularly communities of color, and communities in East Austin, have been vocal about their mistrust of Austin ISD due to its history of segregation, discrimination, and a lack of robust and authentic community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Austin ISD Chief Equity Officer Dr. Stephanie Hawley stated moments before the Board of Trustees decision to approve the 'School Changes': Closures and Consolidations plan that, "...the map that you have of the [school] closures, is a map of what 21st Century racism looks like.", "Our process for selecting schools was flawed and it was inequitable.", "I can't find any documentation of how those selections were made and I talked to all of our staff."; and

WHEREAS, Austin City Council Members Natasha Harper-Madison, Leslie Pool, and Kathie Tovo all publicly joined forces with other state representatives, county commissioners and local community leaders by asking Austin ISD to postpone its vote for more consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Commission passed a resolution on November 25, 2019 recommending that the Austin City Council submit a request for the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees and/or the Superintendent to take specific actions to communicate with certain communities and develop a strategic plan of action;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Asian American Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission supports the Human Rights Commission recommended course of action.

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