

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Asian American Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number: (20200121-04b): 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;

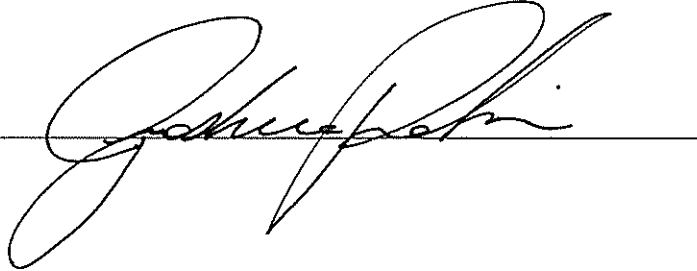
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Asian American Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission recommends that the members of Austin City Council submit a request for the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees and/or the Superintendent to:

1. Publicly issue a letter of apology to the four school communities with students that may be negatively affected by the school closures and consolidations plan that included a "map of what 21st century racism looks like" and for disregarding the public statement by the district's very own well-qualified Chief Equity Officer Dr. Stephanie Hawley; and
2. A strategic plan of action (that is co-created with the district's Chief Equity Officer) and will be utilized by the district in order to correct the Board of Trustee's decision to proceed forward with school closures and consolidations while using a "21st century map of racism," and disproportionately closing schools with extremely high percentages of African-American, Hispanic, and low-socioeconomic student populations.

Date of Approval: January 21, 2020

Record of the vote: Moved by Commissioner Stanton, Seconded by Commissioner Wang.
Unanimous on a 13-0 vote (Commissioners Chao, Chen, Yoshida, DasGupta, Cobalis, Saxena, Sethi, Yang, Patil, and Patel) Absent: Commissioner Radhakrishnan

Attest: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Patil", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.