



Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization  
Octavio Castelo, Secretary to the County Committee  
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**SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL:** [Castelo\\_Ocatavio@lacoed.edu](mailto:Castelo_Ocatavio@lacoed.edu)

Dear Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization Members:

On behalf of the City of Santa Monica, we are writing to request that you DENY the City of Malibu's October 12, 2020 Petition ("Malibu Petition") to split the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District ("SMMUSD") into two separate districts.

On November 10, 2020, the Santa Monica City Council unanimously approved a motion directing staff to prepare a letter to the Los Angeles County Office of Education (the "Committee") in response to the Malibu Petition, affirming the City Council's support for a split of the SMMUSD, but only if the terms of separation, including but not limited to, the division of revenues and assets, are fair and just to students in Santa Monica schools and provide robust and equal educational opportunity for both Malibu and Santa Monica students. A copy of this agenda item is enclosed herewith.

On March 10, 2021, we sent a letter to the Committee requesting that the Committee DENY the Malibu Petition as the Malibu Petition did not propose an equitable split. A copy of this letter is enclosed herewith.

On March 23, 2021, the Santa Monica City Council unanimously approved a motion reaffirming its position that a division of the SMMUSD should occur only if the terms of separation, including but not limited to the division of revenues and assets, are fair and just to students in Santa Monica schools, and provide robust and equal educational opportunity for both Malibu and Santa Monica students. A copy of this agenda item is enclosed herewith.

We have reviewed the September 2, 2021 report to the Committee from its staff and their consultant wherein staff and the consultant conclude that 8 of the 9 criteria are not substantially met. Among the criteria that are not met are those that deal with the division of revenues and assets. We are very troubled with the conclusion in the report that states: "The analysis clearly illustrates that the proposed reorganization would have a *substantial negative effect on the fiscal health of the remaining Santa Monica USD.*"

In light of this and the other negative findings, before the Council at its September 14, 2021 meeting is the proposed adoption of a resolution in support of the Committee summarily denying the Malibu Petition.

We find it difficult to understand that despite the obvious failings of the Malibu Petition, County Committee staff has recommended to nevertheless move the Malibu Petition into a regular review process under Education Code section 35753.



This is particularly true under the present difficult circumstances. Our educational community (like all others) is devoting tremendous time, energy, and resources into navigating the provision of educational services in the midst of a resurging pandemic. It seems to us that continuing down a path of additional hearings and process for a petition that is so far removed from viability would require the Committee and the parties to commit to an effort that cannot succeed without extensive investment of additional resources, time, and energy, all of which are in dangerously low supply.

It is for these reasons we implore the County Committee to exercise its discretion to deny the Malibu Petition pursuant to Education Code section 35721.

Such a denial would only terminate the current *Malibu* Petition. It would NOT preclude the communities from working together to create an independent Malibu School District in a way that is fair and just to students in Santa Monica schools, and that provides a robust and equal educational opportunity for both Malibu and Santa Monica students. We remain committed to assisting our communities with arriving at such a result. We fear that our efforts have little chance of succeeding in the shadow of the Malibu Petition, a petition that will never be able to achieve the fairness that the City of Santa Monica and SMMUSD desire.

Sincerely,

Sue Himmerlrich  
Mayor

Kristin McCowan  
Mayor Pro Tempore

Enclosures