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For Immediate Release

News Release

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May 13, 2014
#13/14-183

SCHOOL BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES RESOLUTION FOR CREATING WELLNESS CENTERS

'A Smart Investment in Our Communities' Health for Our Students' Success'

LOS ANGELES – Healthy students regularly attend school and generally do better than youngsters who are sick or facing health challenges such as ear and other infections, toothaches, vision problems and conditions such as asthma. To encourage keeping all students healthy, the Los Angeles School Board approved a resolution today calling for greater access to comprehensive school-based health services.

School Board Member Mónica García sponsored the resolution; it was co-sponsored by Board President Dr. Richard Vladovic and Board Vice President Steve Zimmer.

"Congratulations to the Wellness Centers Now! Coalition for winning a great victory for our students and families in securing the \$50 million investment for the Phase 2 of Wellness Centers at LAUSD," said School Board Member Mónica García. "I am profoundly grateful to the members of the Board of Education and Dr. Rousseau for their support and leadership on this issue."

"Healthy kids are successful kids and I'm so proud of our board for taking this unanimous action," said Board President Dr. Vladovic.

"We took a major step today," Board Vice President Zimmer said. "We took a major step toward a transformational commitment to the health and wellness of our students and their families. Today, we recognize and reaffirm that our students cannot achieve if they are not in school. They cannot achieve if they do not feel well. They cannot achieve if they are worried about their Mom or Dad, their sister or brother. Supporting our students means investing in the health and wellness of their families. I am proud we chose to turn towards, not away, from our families today."

The resolution cites plenty of data to substantiate the connection between good health and student achievement. From the California Endowment, a private health foundation, it states, "When students are healthy in mind and body, they are more engaged, miss less school, focus better in class and are more likely to graduate." From the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it offers, "The academic success of America's youth is strongly linked with their health.

In turn, academic success is an excellent indicator for the overall well-being of youth, and is a primary predictor and determinant of adult health outcomes. Studies by the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative "have shown that traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence can diminish concentration, memory, and the organizational and language abilities students need to succeed in school; thereby, negatively impacting academic performance, classroom behavior and the ability to form relationships."

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“LAUSD's Wellness Initiative represents an approach to student and community health that is among the most hopeful strategies to health equity for all,” said Maryjane Puffer, executive director of the L.A. Trust for Children's Health. “Over 20,000 students, family and community members have used the services and that will more than triple by next year. LAUSD and partners should invest generously in this opportunity for student health that directly leads to student success.”

“School based health centers are a cornerstone for increasing access and improving health for students and their families, which is why the Affordable Care Act invested so heavily in the expansion and development of school wellness centers,” said Jim Mangia, president & CEO of St. John's Well Child & Family Center. “School-based healthcare is the roadmap for how to improve health and education attainment for students across the LAUSD system.”

“Wellness Now! represents a comprehensive approach to transforming our schools into hubs for serving our communities,” said Maria Brenes, executive director of InnerCity Struggle, an Eastside community group. “By adding health based and health promoting facilities onto the highest need schools in LAUSD, this investment will support the well-being and academic achievement of students.”

“When children are healthy they are present in school and ready to learn,” said Kiechelle Russell, Resource Teacher at New Open World Academy. “ I support Health and Wellness Centers because I believe they can provide services that meet my students' basic needs giving them the opportunity to have better academic outcomes,”

Statistics indicating the huge number of children without health insurance throughout Los Angeles County give greater urgency to the board's action. Comprehensive medical services, including mental health, have reduced absences, academic failures, dropout rates and disciplinary referrals in other large urban school districts, according to the resolution.

In L.A. Unified, wellness centers, actually school-based clinics right on campus, can provide “comprehensive and integrated acute and preventative medical, mental, oral and social support care to students.” In addition, these centers provide “affordable and convenient alternatives” for those without health insurance.

Currently, 12 wellness centers exist throughout the District, and two more will open this fall.

The board's action directs the superintendent to create within six months a plan that identifies opportunities to leverage matching funds that expands the number of wellness centers and services at schools.

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