

BOARD OF TRUSTEES February 17, 2023

CARLA CORONA

CHARLES HUGHES

JILL MCGRADY

MIGUEL SANCHEZ IV

DONITA J. WINN

Sent Via Email

Dear Mses. Appell, Helena, Santa Ana, and Cincone:

ADMINISTRATION

GREG NEHEN
Superintendent

SHANDELYN WILLIAMS
Deputy Superintendent

BRIAN HAWKINS
Assistant Superintendent
Business Services

DR. CHRIS GRADO
Assistant Superintendent
Educational Services

KRISTINA RAMOS
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources

The Antelope Valley Union High School District (District) is in receipt of your January 19, 2023 letter outlining your clients' concerns regarding the District's policies and practices pertaining to student discipline, which, as you allege, have resulted in discriminatory treatment based on race and disability. As a preliminary matter, the District takes the nature of the allegations raised in your correspondence very seriously. And, as most of you have witnessed during the past year and a half, the District does have in place processes and systems to identify and address such concerns. However, as is the case with any large organization, the work of reviewing and adapting those processes and systems to ensure that no group is disproportionately impacted is an ongoing effort. An effort to which the District remains committed.

While this letter will not respond to every allegation lodged in your letter, I will note that there are several statements that contain sweeping conclusions that suggest either a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the voluminous data and documentation to which you have been privy. For example, your letter states that the District "does not adhere to any of the procedural requirements for students with disabilities when using force and restraints[.]" To support this assertion you claim that the District does not require staff to complete behavioral emergency reports when a student has been restrained, despite having been provided copies of multiple BERs on at least one occasion.

Additionally, you state that the District fails to provide language interpreters during individualized education program (IEP) team meetings or translate IEP documents for limited-English proficient parents. Although you have not previously raised this as an area of concern, a review of many of the IEPs that were provided to you indicate the participation of an interpreter in IEP meetings. Further, while none of your previous requests sought translated IEP documents, there are copies of translated IEP documents contained in the documents that were provided to you. These are just a few examples where you have asserted broad statements of fact and where the District believes the information that has been made available to you supports conclusions opposite of those reached in your letter.

With regard to your demands, and while you may disagree, the District will continue, in its discretion, to engage in practices that are provided for in the law (e.g., refer for expulsion for mandatory expellable offenses, as appropriate and consistent with applicable laws) or otherwise not prohibited by law (e.g., refer students to Student Support Centers, implementation of the level-system in SDC-B classes), while continuing to review its practices to identify areas for improvement.

As District representatives have requested, if you have specific clients or instances where you believe the District has failed to comply with the law in any regard, please provide that information to the District so that the matters can be reviewed and resolved as may be warranted. Claiming that the District is in wholesale violation of a law or policy, when evidence demonstrates otherwise, and demanding that the District put in place a third-party expert to review what appears to be almost all District practices and policies is neither helpful nor a productive use of resources. While the District has been collaborative and forthcoming over the past year and a half, and remains committed to addressing areas of concern related to the discipline of black students and students with disabilities, we do not believe that your letter provides a reasonable path forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gregory Nehen
Superintendent