



August 21, 2018

Tlakiltijkej tokniuan. Nitoka Marcos Aguilar. Nihualehua Otsuugna pan Anahuacalmeac. Good afternoon Board members,

My name is Marcos Aguilar (Azteca Mexicano). I am the Tlayecantzi and IB Head of School of the ONLY indigenous community-based autonomous school in the county of Los Angeles, California, Anahuacalmeac International University Preparatory of North America. Our school is located in nican chanehqueh Gabrielino Tongva sovereign territory, now known as Los Angeles - formerly Otsuungna.

Anahuacalmeac is a California autonomous public charter school unanimously authorized by the State Board of Education in 2014. Together with the community members present here with me including Minnie Ferguson, Tlayecantzi Director of Education, Board member Dr. Ernesto Colin, Parent Board Member Gitana Ayala, Director of Instruction and Assessment, Erica Gutierrez, Parents Arturo Rojas and Yvette Casas, as well as student leaders including Natalie Pu Ramos, as well as two of our teachers, Alejandro Trujillo and Jose Luis Gutierrez, and alumnus Nora Perez,

Together we are here today on behalf of our school community and organization to urge you to vote in support of the petition to renew the charter of Anahuacalmeac.

We would like to begin by acknowledging the historic improvements and gains LAUSD has made since we first opened in 2002. In particular, we recognize the leadership of Board President Monica Garcia over all of these years focusing on improving schools inside and out to benefit our most vulnerable students and communities across the city.

As you may recall, Anahuacalmeac was the first public school in the City of Los Angeles to become an authorized International Baccalaureate World School in 2008 sparking a movement within LAUSD to adopt the IB programs in schools across the District. In 2017 we collaborated with the ACLU and other charter schools to develop the California Schools Are Sanctuaries coalition which earned the support of this Board to enact the "LAUSD Schools as Safe Zones for Families Threatened by Immigration Enforcement" resolution and policies. In 2017 we also collaborated with IB schools in LAUSD to host the first ever IB Middle Years Program Coordinators Symposium with the support of the California Association of World Schools. Better schools and increased graduation rates are good for all children in Los Angeles and we celebrate our collaborations towards these goals over the years.



As Indigenous Peoples, we recognized last year as the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which among other rights recognizes our right to control our own institutions of education and the government's obligations to provide mechanisms by which to achieve these rights. Charter school legislation can serve as one such mechanism, and any intent or actions to interfere with the rights to self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples must be recognized as an intent to further to the project of assimilation, deculturalization and colonization so infamously begun under the government run "PUBLIC" boarding school pedagogy of "killing the Indian to save the man."

Today, Anahuacalmeac celebrates partnerships with collaborators around the continent and indeed around the world, as we celebrate the inclusion, recognition and cultivation of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge in our school through a pedagogical focus on cultural inquiry, community building and preparation for college. We refer to this pedagogy as SOBRESISTENCIA, a concept centered upon our survival, endurance and resilience as Indigenous Peoples. Through our partnerships, and over the course of the past charter term, our students, teachers and parents have participated in truly historic experiences including the 2015 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN Headquarters, the 2016 World Indigenous Law Conference at UC Irvine, the 2017 Indigenous Peoples Day campaign at City Hall through which we abolished Columbus Day in the City and County of Los Angeles and established Indigenous Peoples Day in its place. In 2018, Anahuacalmeac was honored to formalize a collaborative partnership with the indigenous government of Copalillo, Guerrero, Mexico in Nahuatl education in public indigenous schools as an extension of our participation in the California Department of Education (CDE) Exchange Visitor Program for over a decade. In 2018, Anahuacalmeac also established a partnership with the UCLA American Indian Studies Center to develop youth designed content on Indigenous Peoples for UCLA's knowledge webpages. All of these experiences and many others which we organized in between brought life to what we refer to as the Living Curriculum which connects what our students learn in the classroom to the real world in real time.

Throughout these amazing experiences engaging with community, our students work diligently to meet personal and community academic goals including school completion, college readiness, bilingual literacy and native language revitalization as individuals and as family members. Anahuacalmeac has met all of its performance targets as set out in the charter of 2014 as authorized by the State Board of Education. Most importantly, the combined result of both high expectations and high support for our students has been reflected in the fact that based upon recent surveys the vast majority of our



students and parents believe that Indigenous students and people are respected in our school environment. This may seem unimportant to some outside our school, but when compared to youth suicide and attempted suicide rates in American Indian and indigenous communities of Latin American origin, particularly Latinas, our success with students is very real and important to US.

Our success has also included the cultivation of partnerships with major colleges and universities in our area including UCLA, UCI, UCR, CSULA, ELACC, Pitzer College, Pomona College and Western University of Health Sciences to name a few. Through these partnerships and others, Anahuacalmeac students participate in extended summer programs, afterschool programs, enriched class offerings and college and career pathways designed to help guide and support our students academic and personal goals in a way which celebrates their indigeneity and complements their individuality. Anahuacalmeac builds these pathways to college and career through three major programs, the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program for grades TK-5, the IB Middle Years Program for grades 6-10, and our unique college preparatory program, the IndigeNations Scholars Program, developed in partnership with Pitzer and Pomona Colleges for grades 11 and 12.

Since earning the unanimous support of the State Board of Education, Anahuacalmeac has had to face and overcome challenges not uncommon to charter schools. A fiscal shortfall was created in 2016 when the SBE authorized the merger of our programs Tk-12, but the CDE did not provide funding as projected. Anahuacalmeac overcame this fiscal shortfall by accessing our school's assets in consultation with various fiscal experts including FCMAT, the CDE, MKM Accounting and our own lenders, ProAmerica Bank. Additionally, and in part as a result of this fiscal shortfall, Anahuacalmeac's planned preparations for the major transitions in state assessment to CAASPP through online testing suffered setbacks. However, with adequate funding and a strategic focus on demonstrating student achievement on CAASPP and other state assessments, our students improved by 23% in Math and by 12% in ELA overall. Based upon this growth and the rather static indicators of a lack of growth on state and local indicators in publicly available data, we are projecting performance in 2018 to out pace student performance as compared to similar demographic groups locally, statewide and in all charter schools across the state.

Yet, after over 500 years of colonization, Anahuacalmeac stands as the only school in the greater Los Angeles area that teaches any Indigenous language, including A-G approved courses in one of my community's maternal indigenous languages, Nahuatl-Mexicano. Recently, the State of California authorized new legislation calling



for the creation of Native American Studies curriculum. Assembly Bill 738, the Native American Studies law notes that:

- “There is a growing body of academic research that shows the importance of culturally meaningful and relevant curriculum.
- The Legislature has established an American Indian language-culture teacher credential by its passage and signature by the Governor of Assembly Bill 544 in 2009 and Assembly Bill 163 in 2015, its findings that teaching American Indian language and culture is essential to the proper education of American Indian children and that preserving American Indian language and culture is an important part of our national heritage and can be of value to all Americans.
- Native American studies benefit pupils in observable ways, such as pupils becoming more academically engaged, increasing their performance on academic tests, improving their graduation rates, and developing a sense of self-efficacy and personal empowerment.

And that,

- The state’s educational standards should be guided by core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations.”

Anahuacalmecac’s holistic approach to education TK-12 does all of this and more.

We urge you to support the renewal of the charter of Anahuacalmecac as an autonomous Indigenous Peoples community-based school as an opportunity to expand Native American educational opportunities in Los Angeles for all Indigenous Peoples, families and children.

In closing, we would like to recognize Tata Cuaxtle Felix Evodio, who with his dying breath almost four years ago commissioned us to establish a school like Anahuacalmecac in his home community in Guerrero Mexico and to never forget: Xquema tihquitos ka, maske tik matis ititlantokej - never give up, even upon your last breath of life. I leave you with copies of the National Urban Indian Family Coalition report on RESURGENCE: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education which includes Anahuacalmecac as a model school in this national study.

Tiktlatso kamachilistle nokniuan. Thank you.