



June 15, 2018

The Honorable Trent Hatch, President - District 6
The Honorable Bob Geske, Vice President - District 1
The Honorable Al Velarde, Secretary - District 2
The Honorable Susie Byrd, Trustee - District 3
The Honorable Diane Dye, Trustee - District 4
The Honorable Chuck Taylor, Trustee - District 5
The Honorable Mickey Loweree, Trustee - District 7

Board of Trustees
El Paso Independent School District
6531 Boeing Drive
El Paso, Texas 79925

Dear Board of Trustees:

Like many others in the community, we recently learned about the district's proposal to close Beall, Schuster, and Moye in the 2018-19 school year, as well as Hawkins, Rivera, Rusk, and Alta Vista in the 2019-20 school year. These are in addition to the closure of Bonham, Johnson and Roberts, which will be shuttered in the 2020-21 school year in an effort to make up a \$7 million deficit. We have serious concerns that this announcement was made on June 11th, a mere 10 days before the June 21st deadline, when the board will announce a final decision. We appreciate that there will be two public hearings on June 18th and June 19th, but that is not nearly enough time for the community to digest the impact, develop a thoughtful response, or for the board to consider alternative proposals.

We strongly urge the Board of Trustees to extend this timeline to give the community and stakeholders ample time to fully contemplate these proposals. After speaking with key stakeholders, we are particularly concerned about the varying budget deficit numbers that the district has shared publicly. It's our understanding that the administration has programmed \$10 million in savings into this year's budget. After the reduction of \$4.5 million due to declining revenue and presuming expenses were kept the same, then the district should still have \$5.5 million in savings remaining. However, the administration has stated an anticipated \$7 million deficit. How does the administration explain what appears to be \$12.5 million in new spending in the upcoming 2018-19 budget? Even then, we understand these numbers are subject to change. This means the public still is unaware of what the final proposed budget is and where the funds are going to be used.

These closures affect the lives of students, parents, teachers, and many others. At a minimum, proposals to close schools must include the process for student and teacher transfers, programmatic changes, transportation needs, and the future of the facilities themselves. This should be a thoughtful and reasoned process, not rushed through at the last minute. There are too many questions to be answered and issues to be vetted before the June 21st vote, especially since the anticipated closure savings of \$600,000 in the upcoming year would constitute less than one percent of the district's entire budget.

The paramount issue for this district, especially the board, has been rebuilding the community's trust and confidence. While the district made early significant strides, as evidenced by voters' approval of last year's bond, which we supported, it appears that the district has regressed. First, a district audit found evidence of bid tailoring, insider information, and vendor favoritism in relation to GAFCON and facilities construction oversight. Subsequently, politics began to infiltrate the actions of the board, as demonstrated by the public feud and actions of certain board members to prop up candidates rather than focus on the business at hand, such as budget management. This led to an audit of Trustee Byrd that has yet to be released or dismissed, despite that assurances that it would be expedited. Now, reports are coming out about spending proposals that were not previously accounted for while schools are being closed in the name of cost savings.

In light of all this, it would be prudent to hold off on the proposed school closures. We believe if the board moves forward, you may lose whatever remains of the community's trust and confidence. We urge you to delay this decision until the next fiscal cycle, and to spend time working to fully regain our trust by vetting these proposals with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other community stakeholders.

Thank you for your service to our community, and your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance on this or any other matter.

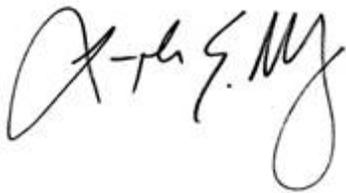
Sincerely,



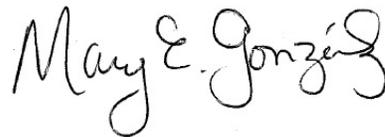
José Rodríguez
Texas Senate District 29



Joe C. Pickett
Texas House District 79



Joseph E. Moody
Texas House District 78



Mary E. González
Texas House District 75



César José Blanco
Texas House District 76



Evelina "Lina" Ortega
Texas House District 77