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PRESS RELEASE

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Advocates Reach Accord with West Contra Costa Unified Over \$4.3 Million Missing from Spending Plan

District Agrees to Revise Plan for Spending on High-need Students

San Francisco – The West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) has agreed to amend its spending plan for funds it received from the state to increase or improve services for low-income students, English language learners and foster youth in response to complaints by parents that officials had skirted the law when they first drafted their plan.

Public Advocates and Mayer Brown filed a complaint on behalf of WCCUSD parent Isabel Cruz and two other parents with the California Department of Education (CDE) that challenged the district's omission of some \$4.3 million from its 2015-16 Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) as a violation of state law. Attorneys for Ms. Cruz said if the CDE could not resolve the dispute, they would take the matter to court. The CDE agreed that WCCUSD officials had not complied with their duty to engage stakeholders in the process and transparently display all funding for high need students.

"It took a tremendous effort by Ms. Cruz and the community for the district to finally follow the law and be transparent about these funds, but it means a lot to parents concerned with closing the achievement gap" said Rigel S. Massaro, staff attorney with Public Advocates. "What's more, the message from the CDE and the local action by WCCUSD sends a clear signal to school districts throughout California: local plans must fully account for the spending of these funds and if the funds are to be allocated mid-year, the law still applies," she said.

To address the parents' complaint, the WCCUSD consulted with parent committees, held a public hearing, and last night the WCCUSD Board approved the revised 2015-2016 spending plan, which now includes all funds generated by high-need students. The district has also committed to carry over any unspent funds intended for services for high-need students to the 2016-17 LCAP, as the law mandates.

Under the 2013 law known as Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) all parents, students, and teachers must be given the opportunity to weigh in on how best to spend state school funds. The district must also receive input from parent and English learner advisors, hold open meetings and respond to written comments before finalizing its spending plan and then obtain county office of education approval.

The parents did not resolve their claims regarding the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, namely that the district failed to report LCFF funds allocated to teacher salary increases. Nevertheless, as a result of the parents' complaint, the district greatly improved transparency in its 2016-2017 LCAP concerning how it spends its funds, above and beyond just the funding targeted on high need students.

The parents and their attorneys hope these victories in WCCUSD lead to greater transparency and accountability throughout California, as there is a growing concern among education advocates that WCCUSD's initial failure to follow the rules governing the LCAP local control process is not an isolated incident. With billions of dollars at stake statewide, it is important that school districts be required to follow the law in a transparent fashion, ultimately providing the information needed to understand local spending decisions and their implications for students and meaningfully involving the local community in those decisions.

To see the Settlement and Release Agreement, click [here](#)

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