

**Subject: Resolution No. 148-12A4**

**Urging the San Francisco Unified School District to Meet the Needs of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children Fleeing from Central America**

- Commissioners Matt Haney, Sandra Lee Fewer, Kim-Shree Maufas, Hydra Mendoza-McDonnell, Emily M. Murase, Rachel Norton, Jill Wynns, & Student Delegates Gavin Chan, and Elizabeth Jones

**WHEREAS:** In recent months an unprecedented number of children have fled their home countries in Central America to seek refuge in the United States; and

**WHEREAS:** Data collected by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) shows that since October 2013, approximately 47,017 Central American children have fled from their home countries into the United States, which represents a substantial increase from prior years; and

**WHEREAS:** It is estimated that the number of children entering the United States in fiscal year 2014 will exceed 60,000, with an average of 120-400 children crossing the border each day; and

**WHEREAS:** From January to June 2014, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that approximately 175 school-aged children were released to relatives and host families in San Francisco, with many more likely arriving without being processed by DHHS; and

**WHEREAS:** More girls are migrating than in previous years because of regional increases in gender-based violence; and

**WHEREAS:** During their dangerous journey to the United States, many children become victims of trafficking, sexual abuse and violence; and

**WHEREAS:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) interviewed more than 400 unaccompanied minors and the minors stated that extreme poverty, unemployment, trauma and the lack of state protection from gang violence and drug-traffickers were the main reasons for fleeing their home countries; and

**WHEREAS:** According to the UNHCR, approximately two-thirds of the minors who have recently arrived qualify for international protections as a result of violence and abuse in their home countries; and

**WHEREAS:** Once apprehended by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, many of these children have been placed in detention facilities and processing centers where they have been subjected to inhumane living conditions for indeterminate periods of time; and

**WHEREAS:** The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the agency responsible for the care and well-being of unaccompanied immigrant children, has identified the need for children to receive culturally competent and trauma-informed medical and social work services for life-skills readiness and to ease their social integration process; additionally, ORR cited the need for legal services to ensure that every child has access to counsel and receives due process; and

**WHEREAS:** The federal foster care program, which is designed to place unaccompanied children who cannot be reunified with their family members with foster families, is unable to meet the growing demand for host families; and

**WHEREAS:** The Obama Administration and DHHS are soliciting the assistance of major cities, including San Francisco, to leverage city resources to help address this escalating international humanitarian crisis; and

**WHEREAS:** The San Francisco Bay Area is home to a large and vibrant Central American community and has a longstanding history of supporting the advancement of human rights throughout Central America, evidenced by the important role it played during the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980's when San Francisco provided a safe-haven for Central American refugees fleeing civil conflict; and

**WHEREAS:** Since the passage of the Sanctuary Ordinance in 1989, San Francisco has held the distinction of being a "Sanctuary City" providing equal access to public services and civil protections without regard to an individual's immigration status; and

**WHEREAS:** This year the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution introduced by Supervisor David Campos stating the City and County of San Francisco's commitment towards aiding in the humanitarian relief effort by leveraging city resources towards addressing the needs of unaccompanied immigrant children coming to San Francisco; and

**WHEREAS:** The United States Supreme Court in 1982 ruled in Plyler v. Doe that public schools were prohibited from denying immigrant students access to elementary and secondary public education. The Court stated that undocumented children have the same right to a free public education as citizens of the United States and permanent residents; and

**WHEREAS:** Unaccompanied immigrant children often have had long periods of disruption to their schooling;

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District has repeatedly expressed our support for all students, and their ability to learn, grow and thrive in every available facet of our school district, regardless of their country of origin and/or documentation status; and

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Education has previously passed resolutions in support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, the Federal DREAM Act, and policies to support our students and former students in applying for "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; and

**WHEREAS:** The San Francisco Unified School District has a number of "Newcomer Pathways" at all grade levels, which serve recently arrived immigrant English Learner students who need a period of adjustment and orientation before entering a language pathway or English Plus Pathway; and

**WHEREAS:** The curriculum in the Newcomer Pathway includes transition support and primary language instruction or support in academic areas at grade level, as well as intensive academic support; and

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**Urging the San Francisco Unified School District to Meet the Needs of Unaccompanied Minors Fleeing from**

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**WHEREAS:** The Newcomer Pathway at S.F International High School is especially designed and capable to serve immigrant English Learners who arrived in the U.S within the last four years; and

**WHEREAS:** The percentage of unaccompanied minors at SF International has surpassed 25% of enrollment, up from 10% in 2009;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the San Francisco Unified School District assist in the humanitarian relief effort by dedicating resources towards addressing the short and long term needs of unaccompanied immigrant children enrolling in SFUSD public schools by:

- a) Providing information and professional development for teachers, staff and administrators at relevant school sites to ensure adequate services and support are provided to the unaccompanied immigrant children, including information relating to legal services, health, and housing;
- b) Ensuring that there is adequate school district staff time available to coordinate trainings, orientations and service referrals to legal, mental health, linguistic and academic service providers.
- c) Coordinating closely with the city, federal government, and local community based organizations to ensure that all relevant services are made available to students, including culturally competent and trauma-informed medical and social work services.
- d) Facilitating access to legal services in order to ensure that the children and their caregivers fully understand the instructions for completing their immigration proceedings.
- e) Promoting the need for host families and sponsors who can provide safe and stable housing opportunities for the unaccompanied children in order to move children from the shelters into homes of relatives or host families as soon as possible.
- f) Ensuring adequate primary language support, including indigenous languages other than Spanish.
- g) Regularly tracking and updating the Board of Education on increases in enrollment in Newcomer Pathways, ensuring that adequate spots and funding are made available to serve the needs of incoming children, and identifying and removing barriers that may prevent school enrollment; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED:** That the San Francisco Board of Education urges our United States government to ensure the humane treatment of the thousands of minors being detained and to extend the necessary level of protections including comprehensive and uninterrupted access to schooling and educational services, humanitarian relief, advocacy, legal support and expeditious reunification of minors with their families; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED:** That the San Francisco Unified School District send a copy of this resolution to the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, United States Senate, the Honorable Barbara Boxer, United States Senate, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives and the Honorable Jackie Speier, U.S. House of Representatives.

**8/12/14**