San Diego Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education
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Richard Barrera
Board President

September 15, 2026

Chancellor Julio Frenk
University of California, Los Angeles
Murphy Hall
Los Angeles, California 90095

Re: Proposed Closure of UCLA Childcare Centers

Dear Chancellor Frenk:

I write as an educational leader and prospective member of the UC Board of Regents to urge you to re-consider the recently announced closure of UCLA's childcare centers. As an almost two-decade member of the Board of Trustees of the San Diego Unified School District, I am no stranger to the fiscal challenges facing public education, especially in the current context of a hostile federal government. But childcare for the families of students, faculty and staff is far more than just a line on a balance sheet. It is an essential pillar in creating a world-class, diverse and vibrant university community.

For sixty years, providing affordable, high-quality childcare for student and faculty caregivers has been a core element of the university's commitment to building an inclusive and supportive environment for learning. These facilities have enabled parents to perform with the excellence for which UCLA is renowned while also knowing their children are safe, nurtured and close by. Their loss will not only be devastating for the families affected, but it will also undermine the university's Principles of Community which emphasize the creation of "an open and inclusive environment that nurtures the growth and development of all faculty, students, administration and staff." Instead, this step will send the message that students and staff who have family responsibilities, or who do not have the personal resources to find alternative care, have second class status.

The impact of these proposed closures far exceeds any financial benefits that may be realized. Inevitably, the loss of convenient, affordable and high-quality childcare will cause students to abandon their studies and faculty and researchers to seek higher paid employment in the private sector. This will be particularly the case for women, who still often bear the largest share of childcare responsibilities; poorer students; and students from outside the Los Angeles area who may not have family nearby who can serve as a backstop. The loss for an academic community that prides itself on its inclusiveness speaks for itself. The further cost in terms of educating tomorrow's business, academic, and civic leaders – a key aspect of UCLA's contribution to the state and the world – is incalculable.

The financial savings of these cuts will also likely be outweighed by the collateral costs. A 2023 study by ReadyNation, a component of the Council for a Strong America, estimates

that the lack of adequate toddler and infant care costs the nation $122 billion annually in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2038-122-billion-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis According to the study, "[a]lmost two-thirds of parents of infants and toddlers facing child care struggles reported being late for work or leaving work early, and more than half reported being distracted at work or missing full days of work. An overwhelming 85 percent of primary caregivers said problems with childcare hurt their efforts or time commitment at work." Turnover is also costly. Many experts estimate that replacing a departing employee can cost as much as four times the employee's annual salary.

The mission of public education is to serve the whole student. This includes providing nutritious meals, mental health and other wellness services, or even parking and housing. We measure the success of these services not by looking at the bottom line, but by evaluating their contribution to student success. Educational institutions must also be fair and supportive employers. Childcare belongs on the list of essential activities.

I am ready to stand by your side as you advocate for the resources to reverse these cuts with the governor and state legislature, as well as with the business and philanthropic communities. Please do not hesitate to call me or to contact me with any questions you may have.

Warm regards,

Richard Barrera
Board President, San Diego Unified School District
Candidate for State Superintendent of Public Instruction