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PETE AGUILAR
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
31ST DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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June 16, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Secretary
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: San Bernardino City Unified School District School Violence Prevention Program Application

Dear Secretary Garland:

I am writing to express my support for the School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP) application submitted by the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) in partnership with the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. If approved, this project will provide safety training for school district employees and security improvements for schools in the City of San Bernardino, California.

The SBCUSD Office of Emergency Services (OES) recently completed an annual threat assessment and identified physical security improvement needs. Under this grant, SBCUSD will make improvements by providing new door lock mechanisms, door viewers, peepholes and security bars for classroom doors. SBCUSD will contract with law enforcement and mental health professionals to help district employees better understand student violence, techniques to defuse potential explosive situations, and best practices for handling the fallout from campus incidents.

The City of San Bernardino has a critical need for violence prevention programs. According to Uniform Crime Report statistics, San Bernardino's violence crime rate is on the rise. In the first four months of 2021, violent crimes, including murder and assaults, have nearly doubled from 2020 levels. In April 2017, the entire community was devastated by a fatal shooting at North Park Elementary School in San Bernardino, in which a student and teacher were killed and another student was critically injured. Security upgrades have been provided, but school safety remains a serious concern for students and parents.

SBCUSD serves 48,000 students in one of the most impoverished communities in the nation. Districtwide, more than 88 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and 32 percent reside in households with income below the federal poverty level. A SVPP grant will provide a safe environment and help improve academic and developmental outcomes for our children.

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I encourage you to give SBCUSD's application your full and fair consideration, consistent with applicable law and regulations. If you have any questions, please contact Curt Lewis, Grant Program Director in my office: Curt.Lewis@mail.house.gov or (909) 503-8388.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pete Aguilar".

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress