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## **Sacramento City schools launch ‘Safe Haven’ campaign to protect undocumented students**

***Community leaders pledge support for the district’s efforts to inform every student and their families of the legal rights of the undocumented by distributing tens of thousands of ‘know your rights’ fliers at all schools, coordinating with community organizations to provide legal resources in classrooms, and covering all campuses with banners and lawn signs promoting inclusion and welcoming all students.***

SACRAMENTO, CA—The Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) today announced the launch of a campaign to protect its undocumented students and staff amid growing fears of deportation in immigrant communities. The campaign is the first of its kind in California and is the next step in SCUSD’s national leadership on protecting and standing up for undocumented students and their families. District leaders were joined today by State Assemblymember Jim Cooper, County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, City Councilmember Eric Guerra and dozens of students, teachers and community members.

“Our Safe Haven policy was the first step we took to protect our kids,” said SCUSD Vice President Jessie Ryan. “Today, we are taking an even bigger step by launching a full campaign to make sure every undocumented student and parent in our school district knows their rights if approached by immigration officials.”

In December, SCUSD approved Resolution 2915 which directed Superintendent José Banda to support the creation of a Safe Haven district that included compliance with a 2011 federal policy that immigration enforcement officials could not enter district campuses or facilities without prior written approval from the Superintendent. The resolution also restricts the sharing of student files that can be used to determine a student’s immigration status.

The district became one of the first districts in the state to adopt a Safe Haven policy, which has since been described by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson as a model for the rest of California. “This resolution sent a strong message up and down the state that if federal immigration officials try to come on to our schools or use our data to target undocumented students and their families, we will take proactive measures to protect them,” said Ryan.

With today's announcement, SCUSD is taking further steps to ensure that undocumented students, staff and families are aware of their rights and feel welcome and included. The district announced it will distribute tens of thousands of "know your rights" cards in multiple languages to all students and will assist in coordinating immigration attorneys and providers of other resources to help these individuals at school sites. District officials also want to reinforce a message that all students are welcome. The district will begin hanging up multi-colored banners and lawn signs at every school site with the message: "Safe Haven: ALL students are welcome". It will also be running a series of ads and promotional videos on social media to underscore the contributions of undocumented students and families in the community. Parents, teachers and community members will be encouraged to join the campaign by signing pledge cards in support of the Safe Haven effort.

"Our campaign is going to reinforce one common theme—that ALL students are welcome at our schools and that undocumented students play a valuable role in the everyday life of our campuses, and that they are a part of the fabric of our district," said SCUSD Superintendent José Banda. According to Banda, the district will leverage all of its resources and community connections to help and protect its students.

For SCUSD Board Member Mai Vang, the Safe Haven campaign is very personal. "My parents came to this country decades ago as refugees," said Vang, whose parents attended SCUSD schools. "Like many of the immigrant families that we are seeking to protect today, my parents came here fleeing an unsafe environment, in need of opportunities that were not possible in their home land. They did not let hateful rhetoric or people push them out."

SCUSD is one of the most diverse school districts in the country. As many as one in five of its students and families could be affected by federal immigration policies. The district has:

- More than 43,000 students
- 48 different spoken languages that include Spanish, Hmong, Armenian, Korean, Tagalog, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese and Russian
- 64% qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 17,104 are of Latino descent
- 34,896 are students of color
- In 2015-16, nearly one-third of students were English language learners or non-native speakers

For more information visit [www.scusd.edu/safe-haven-district](http://www.scusd.edu/safe-haven-district).

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