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Los Angeles City Council

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(Sent via facsimile or email)

Re: Strong Support for Motion to Amend LAMC 45.04

Dear Council Members Cardenas and Parks:

We are writing in strong support of your motion to amend the “daytime curfew” law (LAMC Section 45.04), which has proved to be detrimental to students and their families and fails to increase community safety. On behalf of The Alliance for Children's Rights, we thank you for your leadership on this critically important issue.

The Alliance for Children's Rights is the leading and sole legal services organization in Los Angeles dedicated exclusively, through a combination of direct legal services, education, and policy work, to protecting impoverished and abused children. Our programs include Adoption, Guardianship, Special Education and Early Intervention, Public Benefits, Health Care, and also includes services to special needs populations including transition age youth and pregnant and parenting teens. The Alliance staff includes lawyers, social workers, medical health specialists, paralegals and advocates supplemented by numerous pro bono attorneys and volunteers who donate their time to help disadvantaged children and ensure their voices are heard.

The Alliance’s Special Education Program serves more than 600 foster youth a year and ensures that these vulnerable children receive an Individualized Education Plan tailored to meet their special needs. This

program is also specifically concerned with dismantling the school to prison pipeline whereby school problems, such as truancy, not only involve a youth in the delinquency system, but inevitably derail their transition to successful outcomes in society.

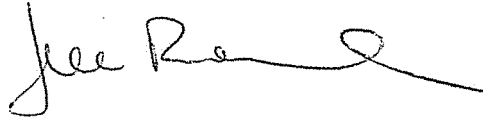
The current daytime curfew law is ineffective, wasteful and unfairly targets all students and in particular students of color and those in the foster care system. The latest statistics reveal that police officers have issued more than 47,000 tickets between 2005 through 2009 with a disproportionate share going to African American and Latino students. Students who receive curfew tickets miss additional school, sometimes two or three days, to attend mandatory court hearings and the schools themselves lose critical Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding for those missed days. Just as importantly, research unequivocally confirms that curfew statutes don't work – they do not reduce crime --- and when we involve students with juvenile court, they are almost four times as likely to be pushed out of school early and become more susceptible to becoming involved in delinquent behavior.

The law hits families with low-incomes the hardest, forcing them to make hard choices to not pay for the basics – like food for the family – in order to pay the hefty fines of \$250 or more per ticket. This law also unfairly impacts foster child and the foster parents or relative caregivers who are struggling to meet their needs. As such, the undue financial hardship on thousands of families in the City of Los Angeles clearly points to the need for reform to amend LAMC 45.04.

There are many reasons why students are late or absent, including delays with public transportation, family problems, school struggles, illness, or even the need to walk a little sister or brother to a different school with the same start time. The common sense amendments in this critical motion will stop unnecessary penalization of these students who are trying to get to school, ensure that families do not suffer undue financial hardships, and help minimize court involvement by instead connecting children to resources to become productive residents of Los Angeles.

We strongly urge the Los Angeles City Council to pass this motion.

Sincerely,



Jill Rowland, Esq.
Special Education Program Director



Laura Streimer
Legal Director

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