



A Difficult Time Ahead: Taking Action to Safeguard the Future of Pasadena Unified

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The Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) is facing a pivotal moment, just weeks after our community faced the devastating Eaton Fire.

With declining enrollment, rising costs, and the expiration of one-time COVID relief funds, we are under immense financial strain. Without swift and decisive action, the deficit will continue to grow, undermining our efforts to maintain the district's long-term financial stability. If we do nothing and the district's finances continue to deteriorate, eventually, the state will be required to step in and take action. Proactive measures are essential now to ensure a solid path for our district's future so we can continue to deliver a high-quality education for all students.

Ensuring a Strong Foundation for Long-Term Stability

Declining enrollment is a primary driver of this financial challenge. Fewer students mean less state funding, and while one-time COVID relief funds helped in the short term, they have expired. Combined with rising costs, this has created an unsustainable financial situation. Over the past several years, PUSD has experienced an annual enrollment decline averaging -2.2% since 2014-15, based on our own census day data, which does not include charter schools. This trend exacerbates the financial pressures we face. While this issue is not unique to PUSD – many districts across California are facing similar struggles – we can no longer rely on temporary solutions. We must take responsible steps now to restore stability and safeguard PUSD's future.

Protecting Classrooms

We understand the impact major budget decisions cause, particularly for our employees. To minimize disruption to schools, we are focusing the largest proportion of cuts at the central office to preserve more resources directly to support our classrooms.

Our staffing adjustments are part of a responsible fiscal stabilization plan aimed at preventing a \$37 million shortfall from compounding. By acting now, we can avoid even deeper, more damaging cuts that could threaten the educational experience of our students, especially as we recover from the Eaton Fire.

Layoff decisions are governed by collective bargaining agreements and state law, with seniority playing a central role. While these guidelines ensure fairness and legality, they are deeply painful to implement. Approximately 151 full-time employee positions may be affected. We will continue to follow all legal protocols to notify affected employees and support them through this transition. We understand the emotional and professional toll that layoffs take on our

employees, and we are committed to providing resources and support during this unprecedented time.

We will also actively work to reduce or rescind layoff notices, as we successfully did last year when we identified vacancies. However, given the scale of our ongoing financial circumstances, it is unlikely we will be able to rescind as many positions as we did in 2024.

The Role of Community Investment

Some have asked if Measure R, Measure EE, or Measure J funds could help avoid layoffs. Unfortunately, Measure R's bond funds are restricted for infrastructure and facilities, while Measure EE and Measure J funds, though vital for operations, are not enough to cover the full extent of the current shortfall.

Thanks to the generous support of our community and voters, these funds are helping us navigate this financial situation. Measure EE provides \$5 million annually, and Measure J contributes about \$10 million, significantly easing some of the financial strain. Without this vital assistance, our situation would be even more difficult. These investments are key to our ongoing efforts to rebuild and secure PUSD's long-term financial future.

Safeguarding our District's Future

No matter the financial challenges we face, our commitment to students will not waver. We will continue to offer programs such as dual language, arts, and career technical education. We will preserve smaller class sizes in key grade levels, ensure experienced teachers remain in the classroom, and maintain critical services. Our priority is to minimize the impact on students' education.

Now, more than ever, we need the strength and understanding of our entire community. We urge our employees, families, and community members to stay informed and engaged. Attend Board of Education meetings, visit our website, and reach out with your questions and concerns. Your voice and engagement are vital as we navigate these difficult decisions together.

Through every step of this process, we remain committed to the core values that make our district great: educational excellence, welcoming schools, and the power of community. By taking action now, we can prevent the deficit from growing and ensure that every student continues to receive the high-quality education they deserve.

This is not just about financial stability. It is about ensuring that every student in PUSD continues to receive a high-quality education in learning environments that prioritize their well-being.

Together, we will navigate these challenges and emerge stronger, more united, and ready for the future.

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