

June 14, 2020

Dear Jody London,

We are a group of Jewish youth from Temple Beth Abraham writing to talk to you about OUSD Police. We're happy to hear about your recent comments expressing your support for eliminating school police. Growing up in Temple Beth Abraham, we learned the importance of safety for every member of our community, and that none of us are safe until all of us are safe. We were taught the value of *tikkun olam*- that it's our duty as Jews to work towards repairing the world. We know you share these values with us.

Police in our schools jeopardize the safety of Black and Brown youth, thus making it our duty as Jewish youth and members of Temple Beth Abraham to support them in **calling on you to vote in favor of the George Floyd Resolution to eliminate the Oakland School Police Department**. We are asking you to vote for the resolution **as is**. It has taken into account the most impacted community members and should not be watered down, changed, or delayed. **We would like to meet with you along with community organizers from the Black Organizing Project over Zoom to have a dialogue about this issue before the June 24 vote.**

Black students make up 23% of OUSD enrollments, while being 73% of students arrested by OSPD. In 2011, OSPD officer Bhatt shot and killed a 20 year old black man named Raheim Brown who was supposedly parked in an "unusual spot" near a school dance at Skyline High School. Later, Bhatt was rewarded by being appointed the chief of OSPD. What does this say about the role of OSPD in keeping us safe? Again, In 2014, two OSPD officers brutally choked a 15 year old special needs student in front of security cameras, but the footage was unreleased for over a year as a coverup. **Young people deserve to feel safe at school, and having cops present in Oakland schools leads to more trauma than it does safety.** The money that goes towards having armed police at school could be put to use implementing better mental health and social work resources.

When someone dies in the Jewish community, we say, "May their memory be for a blessing." In this age of unrest following the murder of George Floyd and countless other Black people by the hands of police, there is heavy demand for not only holding cops accountable, but for defunding and divesting in policing as we know it today. **To make George Floyd's memory for a blessing, we must take a stand for racial justice and listen to the community members who have been the most impacted by police violence and policing in schools.**

In 2017, Toronto voted to eliminate armed police in their schools. Since then, expulsion and suspension rates have decreased, and less children are falling victim of the school-to-prison pipeline. Since Minneapolis just ended police contracts within their schools, OUSD now has the opportunity to make history by dissolving the internal school police, to make sure Minneapolis and other districts around the country don't make the mistake of forming a school police department. **As your last term on the board, this is your opportunity to garner the legacy of**

**a visionary changemaker. Watering down or changing the resolution will not be enough. If not now, when?**

Throughout history, Jews have taken bold stands in support of racial justice, even when it was risky or unpopular to do so. **We hope you will uphold that legacy by voting in favor of the George Floyd resolution on June 24th.** This is a pressing issue that cannot be offset to next year's school board.

We can see that you care about this issue and so do we. It's clear that our connections as Temple Beth Abraham members extend beyond the synagogue and we would love to learn more about your perspective and share more of ours. Knowing what a momentous time this is in history, we want to know what steps you will take. You have the power to make a difference.

**Would you be willing to meet with a group of Jewish youth from Temple Beth Abraham along with community organizers from the Black Organizing Project over Zoom to have a dialogue about this issue before the June 24 vote?**

Sincerely,

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