RESOLUTION NO. 20-067
Berkeley School Board
Re-Evision Public Safety on Berkeley High Schools
July 1, 2020

WHEREAS, as Berkeley High School (BHS) and Berkeley Technology Academy (BTA) play an integral role in shaping the lives of our youth, and thus our future community; and

WHEREAS, Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) and Berkeley High School (BHS) has an obligation to promote the healthy development of each one of its students, which includes protecting them from the impact of systemic racism to the greatest extent possible while they are at school; and

WHEREAS, BUSD is deeply committed to affirming the lives of our students and staff of color and has been working to change our institutional culture to align with that commitment and undo the normalization racial bias, as evidenced by the being the first high school to establish an African American Studies Department, implementing the 2020 Vision for Berkeley's Children and Youth, and passing Black Lives Matter Resolution on June 10, 2020; and

WHEREAS, sufficient and overwhelming evidence across the country that Black and Brown men, women and children and youth have been notoriously killed by law enforcement officers for simply doing activities that are normally harmless - sleeping in their bed (Breonna Taylor), going for a jog (Ahmaud Arbery), playing in the park (Tamir Rice), or trying to survive during a pandemic (George Floyd), all recent victims of a long and historical actions against Black and Brown people; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of the incidents that resulted in students being introduced into the criminal justice system at such a young age could have been more effectively addressed by school personnel, restorative practices, or other community-based mental and public health services; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Unified School District has for decades worked in partnership with Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to forge constructive relationships among students and police officers, as evidenced by the long-standing position of the School Resource Officer, funded by the City of Berkeley, and the establishment in 2017 of the Law and Social Justice class; and

WHEREAS, BUSD recognizes and acknowledges that the School Resource Officer supports the BHS partnership by responding to medical and mental health emergencies, addressing mandated reporting, responding to sexual assaults, protecting against outside threats to the school, coordinating resources from the City of Berkeley for students, and supporting the school safety officers; and

WHEREAS, BUSD approved for 2020-2021 the new position of a Title IX Investigator for BHS, under the supervision of the District's Title IX Coordinator, is responsible for investigating, reporting and providing staff training, and due to State budget cuts of over $7 million recently froze the vacated restorative justice coordinator position; and

WHEREAS, BUSD recognizes that having uniformed and armed police officers on campus can feel intimidating and frightening for students and families who are undocemented and/or who have experienced police violence within their family and/or community; and

WHEREAS, BUSD also recognizes that disarming the School Resource Officer sends our students a clear message that we value their safety and the School Resource Officer, who has the responsibility to protect and provide safety, knows how to maintain peace and order without the use of a gun on young adults in the high school; and

WHEREAS, the School Resource Officer works with BHS staff to divert many students from the juvenile justice system, research shows that engagement with police often perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline which is incompatible and antithetical to our goal of creating safe, healthy, and equitable schools for all BHS and BTA students; and

WHEREAS, as evidenced by school districts across the country, there are multiple resources and pathways available to a police-free school environment while ensuring school safety for students and staff; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, to fulfill its responsibility for undoing the systemic racism that Black children and children of color face, the Board of Education (the "Board") directs the Superintendent, upon approval of this Resolution, to engage the diverse communities of Berkeley High School and Berkeley Technology Academy (BTA) including students, teachers, staff and families, beginning the school year 2020-21 to re-envision the role of Berkeley police on campus; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, based on this community input, the Board directs the Superintendent to develop a plan that addresses safety concerns while also creating pathways for police-free high schools that ensures school safety without interruption to the needs of the students of BHS and BTA,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education calls upon the City of Berkeley to re-invest in racial equity for our youth and participate with BUSD in planning and sharing of resources for alternatives to policing with programs such as, but not limited to, restorative practices, violence prevention, behavioral health and enrichment activities, and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education calls upon the Berkeley Police Department to mandate training in cultural competency, cultural humility, and implicit bias with a particular focus on respect for youth of color, and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education calls for all BHS and BTA administrators, faculty and staff participate in restorative justice and cultural sensitivity and cultural humility training, in an effort to decrease the number of calls to the police for non-threatening offenses.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education review and re-evaluate the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Berkeley and the Berkeley Police Department to reimagine public safety in our schools.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent directly to the City of Berkeley Mayor and all members of the Berkeley City Council, the City Manager, the Chief of Police and the City Clerk.