



Whereas, sexual harassment is a pervasive problem in middle and high schools across America, with 1 in 5 high school girls reporting that they have been sexually assaulted at school¹, 1 in 20 girls reporting that they have switched schools because of sexual harassment, and 58% of 7th to 12th graders reporting that they have been sexually harassed²;

Whereas, behavior that fits the legal definition of sexual harassment is so commonplace and normalized in schools that too often it is dismissed, goes unrecognized and is left unreported;

Whereas, sexual harassment hurts all students, students who refuse (or are perceived by peers as failing) to comply with narrowly prescribed heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality, are at increased risk of being direct targets of sexual harassment and of experiencing schools where it is allowed to flourish as hostile learning environments;

Whereas, students with special needs are vastly overrepresented in Title IX cases as both claimants and respondents, women and girls with disabilities of all kinds are more than twice as likely to have been sexually abused as children than women without disabilities, and only 1 in 30 disabled survivors of sexual abuse report their abuse compared to 1 in 5 survivors without disabilities³;

Whereas, PAUSD schools have in recent years seen an alarming number of serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault, with perpetrators including a high school principal, teachers and students;

Whereas, PAUSD has been subject to ongoing investigation by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) due to repeated failures of the district to comply with Title IX requirements in response to reports of sexual harassment, resulting in the Resolution Agreement of March 8, 2017 that requires the District to take prescribed actions and enter into a monitoring period;

Whereas, the PAUSD School Board commissioned Cozen O'Connor to conduct an investigation ([full report](#)) into incidents that took place at Palo Alto High School (PAHS) in 2016-2017 and investigators found (1) the district failed to comport with key aspects of Title IX, state law, board policy, district policy and district administrative regulations; (2) the incident reflected systemic concerns about application of Title IX and Board policy, particularly in the area of documentation "which impeded the [district's] ability to achieve - and evaluate - compliance";

Resolved, that PTA Council of Palo Alto (PTAC) stands with victims and survivors of sexual harassment, and recognizes that sexual harassment is a pervasive problem in our schools (and broader society) that demands a serious, sustained and multi-pronged response that includes but is not limited to compliance with the spirit and letter of relevant laws;

Resolved, that PTAC urges the PAUSD Board, District Superintendent, and district and school administrators to implement in full the recommendations of the OCR Resolution Agreement of March 7, 2017

[http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/pausd/Board.nsf/files/ARETDQ76E60C/\\$file/OCRResolutionAgreementPalyandGunnSigned.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/pausd/Board.nsf/files/ARETDQ76E60C/$file/OCRResolutionAgreementPalyandGunnSigned.pdf);

Resolved, that PTAC urges the PAUSD Board, District Superintendent, and district and school administrators to fully address and rectify the serious and systemic non-compliance issues identified in the Cozen O'Connor report of September 20, 2017;

Resolved, that PTAC will support programs and initiatives aimed at prevention, including educating all staff to recognize and respond appropriately to incidents of sexual harassment, educating students to better understand the behaviors that are classified as sexual harassment, the real harms that result from these behaviors, and what to do if they are a victim of or witness to sexual harassment, along with initiatives aimed at promoting cultural changes in order to reduce and ultimately eradicate sexual harassment from our schools;

Resolved, that PTAC recommends PAUSD expands existing sex education programs as a key sexual harassment prevention strategy, including education and outreach to our parent communities;

Resolved, that PTAC urges PAUSD to commit to the provision of differentiated comprehensive sex education curricula for students with special needs (where the disability impacts a student's capacity to fully access or benefit from existing programs) as a key

¹ Amy M. Young, Melissa Grey and Carol J. Boyd, "Adolescents' Experiences of Sexual Assault by Peers: Prevalence and Nature of Victimization Occurring Within and Outside of School," Journal Youth Adolescence (2009)

² Catherine Hill, PhD and Holly Kearl, M.A., Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School, (AAUW, 2011)

³ Jesse Krohn, Sexual Harassment, "Sexual Assault and Students with Special Needs: Crafting an Effective Response for Schools", University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change, Vol. 17, Iss. 1, 2014, Art. 2.

measure to both empower and prevent harm to students who are both at vastly increased risk of being victims of sexual assault throughout the course of their lives and are overrepresented in Title IX claims as both claimants and respondents;

Resolved, in recognition of the broader problem of bullying in PAUSD schools that PTAC affirms in full the [Resolution Against Bullying of the National PTA](#) (Appendix 1) and urges the district to comply with all relevant laws and regulations in all instances of bullying.

Appendix 1: National PTA Resolution on Bullying

“Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent organizations support policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying; and

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent organizations endeavor, via educational literature, programs, and projects for parents, students, and school personnel, to bring about an atmosphere of zero tolerance for bullying behavior, and an attitude that bullying behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in homes, schools, playgrounds, buses, school activities, or any place children congregate; and be it further

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent organizations work with the appropriate agencies and organizations in a national effort to inform the general public about the risks and cost of bullying for both the bully and the target, as well as those who witness bullying, and bring about a change in societal attitudes toward bullying.”

Whereas, Bullying in schools is a pervasive problem that can have negative consequences for the school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear, and one that can have negative lifelong consequences, both for students who bully and for their targets; and

Whereas, Bullying is comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a target, as well as indirect behaviors such as spreading rumors and acting in other ways to cause a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion, with all such behaviors, direct or indirect, amounting to physical or psychological intimidation occurring repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse; and

Whereas, Bullying other children and being the target of bullies are considered risk factors for youth violence by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and other relevant organizations, and bullies whose behavior goes unchallenged risk ending up as violent adults, engaging in domestic violence and child abuse; and

Whereas, Bullying for too long has gone unchallenged, with parents, who are often unaware of the bullying problem, neglecting to talk about it with their children; with students feeling that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective and will only bring more harassment from bullies; and with school personnel viewing bullying as a harmless rite of passage that is best ignored; and

Whereas, Those who stand by passively watching or actively encouraging bullying are also affected by these hostile acts; they encourage bullying by creating an audience, they may become desensitized to cruelty, they may learn to imitate bullying behavior and become bullies themselves, and/or they may be fearful for their own safety, adding to their own insecurity; therefore be it

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