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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAUSD Board Acts to Safeguard Academic Programs and Student Support Amid Budget Challenges

Santa Ana, CA — The Santa Ana Unified School District Board of Education took action Monday to protect the District's fiscal health and to preserve the long term ability to maintain its instructional and support services. By addressing the structural budget deficit now, the Board aims to safeguard core academic programs and student well-being initiatives that are essential for our community's success.

At the heart of this resolution is the difficult decision to reduce 262 certificated positions. While never taken lightly, this adjustment is necessary to align recurring expenses with projected revenues and ensure sustainable funding for academic success, mental health support, and extracurricular activities that bolster both learning and social-emotional growth.

SAUSD's current deficit of \$154 million stems from two primary factors: a 5% drop in enrollment over the past year and a total decline of 28% in the last decade, coupled with the cessation of approximately \$400 million in COVID-19 relief funding. With nearly 80 percent of the District's budget allocated to salaries and benefits, personnel adjustments are unavoidable to secure long-term stability.

"The end of temporary federal and state relief grants has left us navigating a significant funding shortfall," said Superintendent Jerry Almendarez. "Since the onset of the pandemic, these one-time funds enabled us to achieve an unprecedented counselor-to-student ratio and to expand mental health services. We knew these resources would expire, so for the past three years we have worked hand-in-hand with staff, union leaders, and community members—gathering feedback, testing ideas, and preparing for the realities we face today."

While many California districts are facing similar fiscal challenges, SAUSD has proactively identified over \$175 million in revenue enhancements and non-personnel reductions over the next two years. Combined with the staffing realignment approved Monday, these measures position the District to preserve high-impact programs and prioritize resources where they are needed most.

We understand the uncertainty this creates for our staff and families," continued Superintendent Almendarez. "That's why we are committed to timely, transparent communication and to providing support resources for those impacted. We will continue expanding initiatives like our School-Based Mental Health Specialist program and deepening partnerships with local service providers to prioritize student well-being throughout this transition."

The District also invites ongoing community input through School Site Councils, LCAP meetings, and public forums, reaffirming its pledge to work collaboratively and responsibly toward a balanced, resilient budget.

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Board of Education

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