MEMORANDUM

TO: WEST ADAMS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

FROM: Governing School Council
BALDWIN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DATE: March 12, 2019

RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION DECLARING BALDWIN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL A “CHARTER SCHOOL-FREE ZONE”

The following proposed resolution is submitted to the West Adams Neighborhood Council for consideration and vote at the upcoming March 18, 2019 WANC meeting.
RESOLUTION DECLARING BALDWIN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL A “CHARTER SCHOOL-FREE ZONE”

AUTHOR: GOVERNING SCHOOL COUNCIL, BALDWIN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DATE SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION March 8, 2019

SPONSORED BY: COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARD WILLIAMS

BACKGROUND

The History and Story of Baldwin Hills Elementary in the Community

Baldwin Hills Elementary School Pilot and Gifted High Ability Magnet Center (“Baldwin Hills Elementary”) is a Pre-K-5 public elementary school within the Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD”). The school is located at 5421 Obama Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90016. The school has been in operation as a traditional LAUSD elementary school since 1941. Baldwin Hills Elementary is designated as a neighborhood school; serving families throughout the West Adams Neighborhood; including Baldwin Vista, Baldwin Hills, Village Green, Baldwin Village and beyond. Baldwin Hills Elementary also offers a gifted/highly gifted magnet program.

Decade after decade, Baldwin Hills Elementary has provided quality education to countless children in the community. The school ranks as one of the highest achieving elementary schools in LAUSD. The academic rigor and STEAM focus at Baldwin Hills Elementary rivals that of some of the top elementary schools in the city. Baldwin Hills Elementary School alumni have gone on to graduate from top colleges and universities in the country. Many of Baldwin Hills alumni are active, productive residents of the West Adams Neighborhood community. Many Baldwin Hills Elementary teachers, staff and volunteers are also residents here in the community- living in walking distance or a short drive to the school.

Like the surrounding community, Baldwin Hills Elementary families and students are culturally and ethnically diverse. The current student body consists largely of African American and Latinx children; yet, Baldwin Hills Elementary is proud to have students and families from nearly all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The ethnic and cultural diversity of Baldwin Hills teachers and staff mirrors that of its families and the surrounding community. The school’s longstanding commitment to diversity was the driving force that inspired Baldwin Hills Elementary to expand its educational breadth, by becoming an “LAUSD pilot school” in 2015.

Three Years Ago, Baldwin Hills Elementary Was Approved by LAUSD To Operate as a “Pilot School” and was Granted Opportunity to Grow and Provide Expanded Educational Resources and Enrichment Opportunities for the Community.
After a lengthy application process, on April 14, 2015, Baldwin Hills Elementary was approved by LAUSD to operate as a “pilot school.” As a district-approved pilot school, Baldwin Hills Elementary had “autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum & assessment, and the school calendar.” Baldwin Hills staff and families were given freedom to develop a culturally-responsive curriculum with project-based learning. As a pilot school, LAUSD approved Baldwin Hills to expand in the following specific areas:

- STEAM curriculum to address the need to build 21st Century skills and enhance student interest in learning
- Information, Media and Technology Skills
- Arts Instruction
- Intentionality placed on working to engage families and community in partnerships, including providing dynamic school-time and afterschool opportunities for homework support, drama, music, yoga, and more.
- Expand enrollment and educational opportunity that is culturally responsive, within a gifted/highly gifted magnet program, or within a community school for families and students

The staff and families were committed to accomplish these pilot school goals. However, Baldwin Hills Elementary School’s efforts have been halted, due to a charter school being placed on campus.

Over the past three years, for the sake of gaining revenue, LAUSD has instituted an aggressive policy of placing startup charter schools onto existing LAUSD campuses – a process commonly referred to a “co-location”. Claiming to be forced by California’s Proposition 39, LAUSD has undertaken a policy of unregulated, mass placement of privately-invested charter schools onto the campuses of its traditional schools, without regard to the crippling effects and draining of resources from the existing LAUSD school. Baldwin Hills Elementary is perhaps the most egregious example of an unjustified co-location in the entire LAUSD school district.

**LAUSD Abruptly Began Taking Away Campus Space and Classrooms from Baldwin Hills Elementary, Handing the Space Over to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary**

On January 15, 2016, just a few months into its first year as a pilot school, Baldwin Hills Elementary was notified by LAUSD officials of a “potential co-location” with a charter school under California Education Code Section 47614 (commonly referred to as Prop 39). This news came as a shock and disappointment to the families and staff at Baldwin Hills Elementary, particularly since the school was approved by LAUSD to expand as a pilot school, just a few months prior.
Despite pleas from the Baldwin Hills Elementary community not to dismantle the campus, LAUSD proceeded to turn over critical classrooms and other campus space to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School – a startup charter school operated by corporate investors. Over the past three years, the co-location of a charter school on the campus has gradually stripped Baldwin Hills Elementary families and students of the educational opportunity they specifically sought from their neighborhood public school.

Below is the timeline of New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School’s takeover of Baldwin Hills Elementary since 2016:

**June 2016**  
Baldwin Hills Elementary lost eight (8) classrooms to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School, over one-third of the campus. The eight classrooms were being used by Baldwin Hills Elementary to provide yoga instruction, chess instruction, individual and group tutoring, individual and group support and counseling; special-needs therapy and support, and after school care and enrichment for Baldwin Hills students. In addition, losing these eight classrooms limited how many classrooms could be used for new students and increasing enrollment at Baldwin Hills Elementary. Ultimately, students from the community seeking to enroll at Baldwin Hills Elementary were turned away for the 2016-17 school year, due to classroom space being turned over to the charter school.

**May 2017**  
Baldwin Hills lost an additional classroom to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School. This classroom had been used by Baldwin Hills Elementary for variety of critical programs throughout the school day; including yoga, chess instruction, special needs student services, psychological support and intervention; and afterschool tutoring, SBAC testing preparation and enrichment specially tailored to the curriculum and pilot school objectives of the school. Ultimately, more children from the community seeking to enroll at Baldwin Hills Elementary were again turned away for the 2017-18 school year, due to classroom space being turned over to the charter school.

**April 2018**  
A petition was delivered to LAUSD offices, with nearly 10,000 signatures from members of the community, urging LAUSD not to take any further space and resources from Baldwin Hills Elementary. LAUSD ignored the petition. (See the following link to the petition, (including comments from petitioners): [https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/protect-baldwin-hills-elementary-pilot-school-from-charter-growth](https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/protect-baldwin-hills-elementary-pilot-school-from-charter-growth)

**May 2018**  
Despite significant protest and community pleas, Baldwin Hills Elementary lost two (2) additional classrooms to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary. As a result, Baldwin Hills had to shut down its Computer and Technology Lab; and its parent-run after school day care and enrichment program – two vital resources to Baldwin Hills families and children. Ultimately, more children from the community seeking to enroll at Baldwin Hills Elementary were again turned away for the 2018-
19 school year, due to classroom space being turned over to the charter school


**Current Situation at Baldwin Hills Elementary School**

*Loss of Enrichment and Curriculum*

As a result of New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School’s “co-location” and expansion on campus, Baldwin Hills Elementary has lost critical campus space and resources. Last year, Baldwin Hills Elementary School’s computer lab was shut down, and the space given to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary. This loss had immediate effects on technology curriculum for Baldwin Hills Elementary students. Baldwin Hills Elementary School’s art room was also confiscated by LAUSD and given to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary. Finally, Baldwin Hills Elementary School’s parent-run after-school day care and enrichment rooms were also taken by LAUSD and given to New Los Angeles Charter Elementary.

*Safety is Now an Issue on Campus*

As a result of the charter takeover of the campus, *safety has become a critical issue at Baldwin Hills Elementary*. Foremost, New Los Angeles Charter school has an open-door policy where they allow their visitors open access to campus; unescorted, simply buzzing their visitors onto campus via a remote intercom system. Charter school visitors are able to roam the entire campus, including campus areas occupied by Baldwin Hills Elementary staff and students. This poses serious safety risks to the staff and students of Baldwin Hills Elementary, not to mention potential liability against LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles.

*Understaffed and Poor Facilities on Campus*

Currently, because of the charter school’s presence, the campus faces with poor facilities conditions, including unclean bathrooms. Cafeterias and other common areas are in poor condition, and in some cases, disrepair. The custodial and facilities staff on campus have not increased with presence of the charter school on campus. As a result, the custodial staff is unable to deal with the poor conditions of the facilities brought on by the charter school’s encroachment onto the campus.

*Class Disruption and Compromised Instructional Time*

Also, because of the “staggered” dismissal schedules, New Los Angeles Charter School ends class 15 minutes earlier than Baldwin Hills Elementary. As a result, the charter school opens the campus to the general public for pickup. As a result, there is loud noise and serious disruption to Baldwin Hills staff and students who are still in class. And again, with an open access to the general public, anyone is capable of roaming the campus at will, including into the
classrooms and instructional spaces occupied by Baldwin Hills staff and students. As a result of the co-location, there is real safety risk to the students and staff at Baldwin Hills Elementary.

**Inadequate Arts Instruction**

The quality of the art program has been severely compromised as a result of having no dedicated art room for Baldwin Hills Elementary. In essence, the art teacher is “mobile” only. She has no dedicated space to keep necessary art supplies. She must spend unnecessary time traveling from classroom to classroom to teach art class. As a result, Baldwin Hills students receive less overall enrichment time with the art teacher, and as a result, are not able to experience the same quality of art education nor access the same art materials. Art instruction is a critical piece of Baldwin Hills pilot plan and mission, which was approved by LAUSD prior to co-location of a charter school onto campus.

**No Technology and 21st Century Skills Instruction**

As set forth in Baldwin Hills Elementary School’s pilot school plan, there is a “digital divide” adversely effecting people of color, including those here in the West Adams Neighborhood. Having a computer lab was essential to the school’s mission to close the digital divide for the students in the community. The computer lab provided a dedicated classroom space, desktop computers and printers where Baldwin Hills Elementary students could learn various computer and technology skills for the 21st Century. Baldwin Hills Elementary is now at a clear disadvantage to other elementary schools with learning critical computer skills. There is no dedicated technology instructor as a result of losing the computer lab. Without a computer lab, Baldwin Hills students lose the opportunity for instruction in cross-curricular subjects such as keyboarding, multi-media instruction, media production, and printing of projects. Staff and teachers at Baldwin Hills fear that without the computer lab, reading and math proficiency will likely decline, which in turn, decrease student test score on state standardized testing. These particular 21st Century skills were exactly why Baldwin Hills Elementary was approved by LAUSD as a pilot school.

Unless Baldwin Hills Elementary regains its classrooms and campus space next year, the school will be forced to overcrowd students into existing limited classroom space, or simply turn students away. Also, Baldwin Hills Elementary will be unable to grow its pilot program that was so uniquely built for the West Adams families and children. Without regaining classroom space lost to New Los Angeles Charter, Baldwin Hills Elementary will be forced to continue to turn away students here in the community seeking to receive a well-established, proven, quality education at Baldwin Hills Elementary.

Baldwin Hills Elementary families and staff have been protesting and trying to get the attention of LAUSD officials for over three years. Fortunately, the UTLA strike in January 2019 was helpful in bringing some media attention to the issue of uncontrolled, unregulated charter school growth here in LAUSD. However, even after the teacher’s strike, LAUSD officials have still chosen to ignore the chaotic conditions on the campus of Baldwin Hills Elementary. A resolution by West Adams Neighborhood Council can serve as a wake-up call to the overzealous, unregulated placement of charter schools onto traditional, fully functioning LAUSD school campuses.
It is important to note that charter encroachments onto public neighborhood schools are particularly rampant here in the West Adams district. The research shows that LAUSD is placing charter schools onto public school campuses in primarily African American and Latinx neighborhoods. This bears out in West Adams Neighborhoods perhaps more than any other community in Los Angeles. The overall negative effect on the community is pitting Black and Brown students and families against each other. Simply put, charter school takeovers are not taking place in predominately majority neighborhoods in the city. Neighborhood schools in majority neighborhoods in Los Angeles are not losing computer labs, art programs and music rooms; nor are they turning away students due to a lack of space handed over to a charter school.

Without an official resolution from the West Adams Neighborhood Council, LAUSD officials and other city leaders will continue to ignore the epidemic of charter schools draining traditional school resources here in the West Adams community.

**Purpose and Goal of Resolution**

The goal of this resolution is to provide a declaration of full support to Baldwin Hills Elementary in resuming its longstanding commitment to provide quality; community-based; culturally responsive; and academically rigorous education to the children of this community. The only way to accomplish this goal is to pass a resolution demanding Los Angeles Unified School District designate Baldwin Hills Elementary as a “charter school-free zone” and protect the school from any charter school “co-location” on its campus.

West Adams Neighborhood Council consists of residents and members of this community. This neighborhood council, through its function and purpose, has the power to investigate and verify available campus spaces in the community, and to what extent. All information received by and presented to West Adams Neighborhood Council suggests that there are alternative spaces available for a charter school to reside and/or grow besides the valuable campus of Baldwin Hills Elementary. Baldwin Hills Elementary is unique school campus in the West Adams Neighborhood, and its campus should be protected from a charter school encroachment.

By presenting and passing this resolution, neither Baldwin Hills Elementary families and staff, nor the West Adams Neighborhood Council, takes a position contrary to charter school growth or school choice for the families in the community. California law, Proposition 39, was established as a mechanism for school districts to provide available space to charter schools seeking space. Prop 39 does not mandate LAUSD or any California school district take away critical space or resources currently in use by a traditional neighborhood public school in operation.

**Conclusion**

Baldwin Hills Elementary School is in a “do or die” situation as a result of a charter school that has encroached upon its campus. There should be no further delay in taking immediate measures to save the school and take back its critical campus space for the community.
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Baldwin Hills Elementary is an LAUSD school, located at 5421 Obama Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90016; and therefore, within the jurisdiction of West Adams Neighborhood Council;

WHEREAS, West Adams Neighborhood Council has authority to advise and advocate as to important issues in its community, including the schools in the community and the families and children attending those schools;

WHEREAS, this resolution was presented, reviewed and unanimously approved by the Governing School Council of Baldwin Hills Elementary; and therefore, represents the full united voice of the Baldwin Hills Elementary School staff and families;

WHEREAS, Baldwin Hills Elementary School is an LAUSD pilot school, and thus approved by LAUSD to follow its mission and goals of: (1) providing culturally responsive curriculum; (2) providing STEAM Curriculum to address the need to build 21st Century skills and enhance student interest in learning Information, Media and Technology Skills; (3) providing culturally responsive and relevant Arts Instruction; and (4) working to engage families and community in partnerships;

WHEREAS, New Los Angeles Charter Elementary, is co-located and occupying space on the campus of Baldwin Hills Elementary School since August 2016; and has been occupying more and more classrooms each year since August 2016;

WHEREAS, as a result of New Los Angeles Charter Elementary’s presence on campus, Baldwin Hills Elementary has lost key school resources, including but not limited to a computer lab, an art room; and a parent-run after school enrichment program;

WHEREAS, as a result of New Los Angeles Charter Elementary’s presence on campus; Baldwin Hills Elementary staff and students faces real safety concerns and disruption due to New Los Angeles Charter’s policy of opening the campus to the general public, allowing unescorted visitors on campus while Baldwin Hills Elementary is still in session; thereby endangering the safety of Baldwin Hills students and staff;

WHEREAS, as a result of the lack of space, Baldwin Hills Elementary students with special needs have no space for critical needs service such as IEP implementation, physical therapy, counseling, occupational or speech therapy, and other individualized support or instruction (currently, such support is being provided outside, or in a small storage area if raining or too cold outside);

WHEREAS, as a result of the lack of space, Baldwin Hills Elementary staff and students are being subjected to compromised and/or unsanitary common areas, including bathrooms and lunchrooms; as a result of sharing such common areas with New Los Angeles Charter Elementary; noting that such conditions did not exist prior to the co-location of a charter school on campus;
WHEREAS, as a result of the lack of space, Baldwin Hills Elementary students have lost their computer lab, which has stifled the students’ ability to: (1) learn technology and 21st Century based skills; (2) receive technology instruction; and (3) learn and engage in cross-curricular subjects such as keyboarding, multi-media instruction, media production, and printing of projects;

WHEREAS, as a result of the lack of space, Baldwin Hills Elementary students have lost their art room, resulting in a significant decline and loss of quality art instruction to the students of Baldwin Hills Elementary;

WHEREAS, enrollment requests to attend Baldwin Hills Elementary have increased over the past three years, however, due to the presence of a charter school on campus, Baldwin Hills Elementary has been unable to grow its student body, and students and families from the community are being turned away and unable to enroll;

WHEREAS, New Los Angeles Charter School has indicated publicly that it no longer wants to occupy space on the campus of Baldwin Hills Elementary School;

WHEREAS, if any additional space is lost by Baldwin Hills Elementary, Baldwin Hills families and staff may be faced with having to consolidate classrooms, loss of the music room, and potential displacement of existing teachers and staff; and continued inability for children in the community to enroll;

RESOLVED, The West Adams Neighborhood Council hereby advises and requests that LAUSD designate Baldwin Hills Elementary School, located at 5421 Rodeo Road, Los Angeles, California 90016, a “charter school free zone.”;

RESOLVED, The West Adams Neighborhood Council hereby advises and requests that New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School, currently co-located on the campus of Baldwin Hills Elementary, be relocated to another campus for the 2019-20 academic school year; and

RESOLVED, The West Adams Neighborhood Council understands and acknowledges that although preliminary and other space agreements may have already been reached between LAUSD and New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School, “alternative space agreements” are available and often reached on an ongoing bases throughout the calendar year; including into the summer; and at any time before the start of a school year. Therefore, there is still opportunity to identify alternative space and reach an agreement for alternative space for New Los Angeles Charter Elementary School for the 2019-20 school year.

APPROVED

Dated: March 18, 2019

West Adams Neighborhood Council