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September 1, 2010

The Honorable Terrence Boren
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Judy Chapman, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Your Honor and Madam Foreperson:

As the superintendents of the public schools in Marin County, we want to endorse the findings and recommendations in the report of June 22, 2010 issued by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury entitled ***School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety***. The Grand Jury has accurately described the positive and essential roles that these officers have in our districts and the unique relationships that they develop with students and their families. The School Resource Officer (SRO) is a position for which there is no real alternative. The position demands a sworn officer with specialized training that enables the SRO to effectively work with students and assist in maintaining a secure and nurturing environment. Feeling safe is a prerequisite to effective student learning.

The Grand Jury also accurately identified the critical issue of funding the positions, given the fiscal challenges being faced by local and county governments as well as our school districts. Both local governments and school districts are confronted with difficult choices as to which priorities to fund. Should a decision be required about where limited resources are to be used for SRO's, we would support first priority being given to the high schools and then middle schools. The SRO often provides proactive intervention before incidents happen as opposed to reactive intervention after an incident requiring police presence has occurred. The contributions of the SRO also help students to become comfortable with the police and to understand their role in helping to maintain the rule of law in our community. We are committed to working with our community and governmental partners in each of our districts to explore possible approaches to funding these important positions.

Thank you to the Grand Jury for your continued concern for the safety and welfare of our students.

Sincerely,

Tom Lohwasser, Superintendent
Dixie School District

Mary Jo Pettegrew, Superintendent
Kentfield School District

Valerie Pitts, Superintendent
Larkspur School District

Ken Benny, Superintendent
Mill Valley School District

Jan La Torre-Derby, Superintendent
Novato Unified School District

Steven Herzog, Superintendent
Reed Union School District

Pattie Dullea, Superintendent
Ross School District

Eileen Rohan, Superintendent
Ross Valley School District

Michael Watenpaugh, Superintendent
San Rafael City Schools

Debra Bradley, Superintendent
Sausalito Marin City School District

Laurie Kimbrel, Superintendent
Tamalpais Union High School District

Larry Enos, Superintendent
Bolinas-Stinson Union School District
Lagunitas School District

Stephen Rosenthal, Superintendent
Shoreline Unified School District
Nicasio School District

Mary Jane Burke
Marin County
Superintendent of Schools