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News Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Superintendent Austin Beutner

Today we should be in a classroom helping students process all that is happening around us. The killing of George Floyd, a handcuffed, unarmed Black man in Minneapolis, is wrong and it shocks the senses. There are no words to express the pain, the helplessness and the anger many of us are feeling. My heart goes out to Black children who have been trying to process this in a home which may be dealing with the disproportionate impact COVID-19 is having on the Black community in health impacts and job losses.

This tragedy must be more than a topic of conversation at every dinner table, in every board room and government hearing. It must serve as a wake up call to unapologetically and with conviction address the systemic bias and institutional racism which exists in many parts of society.

Schools must be part of the solution because a great education is the most important part of the path out of poverty. But opportunity gaps for Black students have persisted for more than a generation. The war on poverty declared more than 50 years ago seems to have been lost.

We don't have all of the answers but are committed to making change.

We must better connect schools with the communities they serve. There will only be progress if all of us – schools, government agencies, philanthropy, business, labor and community organizations – work together to support children.

Educators need to rethink teaching and training. Does curriculum properly explore the role of redlining in city planning and how it creates the racial and economic segregation at the foundation of the school funding disparity? Teachers serve as role models for their students. Yet there are only 52 Black males currently enrolled in teaching programs in the entire California State University system in a state home to about 900,000 African Americans under the age of 25.

And the fight for equitable funding must be won. Schools across the country which serve predominantly communities of color receive about \$2,000 less per student than other

schools. The lack of adequate funding means less support for students when much more is needed.

Educators who are living this moment with their own families will help students try to understand this hateful act and the context in which it is occurring. But it's not the students who will be tested on this. All of us need to demonstrate that Black lives matter. It doesn't mean saying, "Yes, I support you." Rather, it means rolling up your sleeves and doing the work.

We've added teachings and resources on the home page of the Los Angeles Unified website with the hope of helping you and your family discuss these difficult issues. Even though we're not in classrooms, educators in our schools will do their best to help all in the school community in these difficult times.

Please stay safe and well.

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