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## **School and Community Leaders Kick Off First-Ever School Attendance Month in Los Angeles County**

*The County of Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles, and School Districts Unite in a Campaign which Focuses on the Importance of Student Attendance*

LOS ANGELES – For the first time, September is now "School Attendance Month" in Los Angeles County after the County Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District all passed motions to support new efforts to keep students in school and engaged with learning.

On Friday, September 7, Los Angeles students, school and community leaders all spoke about the fresh approach to school attendance that is already showing positive results.

The leaders were invited by the Los Angeles County School Attendance Task Force, a group of justice, law enforcement, and education leaders from the City and County of Los Angeles, civil rights groups, and community members. After years of watching too many students fall behind in school and fall through the cracks, Los Angeles Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash convened the School Attendance Task Force to address the root causes of student absences.

"School attendance is often a complex issue, and there is no magic pill to keep students in school," said **Los Angeles Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash**. "But we can take a fresh approach to enhance the educational experience of our children, improve the quality of their lives and, in turn, the quality of life for others in our communities."

"We continue to struggle with a drop-out crisis in our city, where only about half of our kids receive a high school diploma in four years, and we know one of the primary causes of this is chronic absenteeism," said **Los Angeles City Councilman Tony Cárdenas**, who sponsored the resolution establishing School Attendance Month. "This effort helps us raise awareness about this very important issue, hopefully encouraging all of our community to get involved in helping our students go to school - and stay in school."

A total of 13 school districts have pledged to participate in the first School Attendance Month with special programs and incentives for students to come to school: Alhambra Unified School District, Covina-Valley Unified School District, ABC Unified School District, Pomona Unified School District, Lawndale Elementary School District, Compton Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, Lynwood Unified School District, Bassett Unified School District, Long Beach Unified School District, Burbank Unified School District, and Pasadena Unified School District.

They have launched innovative programs such as Saturday sessions where students can make up lost days, announced awards for students who achieve high attendance marks, and "student recovery days" where school staff do intensive outreach to students who struggle to attend school.

"In order to be successful, students have to be in school. Improving student attendance is a family, district and community responsibility," said **Los Angeles Unified School District Board**

**Member Steve Zimmer.** “Student Recovery Day makes this a reality all across Los Angeles County.”

The School Attendance Task Force released a report in February that urged improved coordination among agencies who work with students to address attendance issues, and restricting the use of punitive practices such as criminal charges as a last resort.

Los Angeles County school leaders launched the "I'm In" campaign to inform and engage the community about the importance of school attendance in students' futures, and to talk about positive new steps to increase student attendance.

“This isn’t the same old story that said, ‘if you don’t come to school, we’ll send you to court. And eventually, we’ll forget about you,’” said **Hernán Vera, President and CEO of Public Counsel**, which is a member of the task force. “This is a new story. It says: ‘Come back to school. We’ll find a way to make it work. For you and your future.’”

Please see the Education Coordinating Council website for more information on the Task Force and resources for School Attendance Month: [www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/ECC\\_TTF.html](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/ECC_TTF.html)

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