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Los Angeles Unified Calls for Federal Acknowledgement of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

LOS ANGELES, April 15, 2021 – The Los Angeles Unified Board of Education joined the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles City Council, and the Los Angeles Community College District in calling for federal acknowledgement of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. The District currently operates over a hundred schools on ancestral Fernandeño-Tataviam land, and serves 2,030 self-identified American Indian students, 4% of whom identify as members of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

“We at Los Angeles Unified recognize and celebrate the contributions and cultural heritage of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, and this resolution calls on the federal government to do the same,” Board President Kelly Gonez, author of the resolution, said. “The federal government has long denied formally recognizing American Indian Tribes, further marginalizing a community whose leadership, advocacy, and cultural heritage have contributed to the empowerment of our schools and communities. Our District stands with the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians in calling for this deeply important and long-overdue recognition.”

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians is recognized by the State of California as a sovereign Indian nation of 900 citizens but has not received the federal recognition that provides critical access to much-needed government funding to address job losses and food insecurity brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Los Angeles Unified School District joins the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in acknowledging this tribe, its contributions and cultural history,” Board Member Scott M. Schmerelson, a co-sponsor, said. “This resolution is an important step toward ensuring justice, equality and the legal sovereignty of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.”

“I am proud to support the formal recognition of the history, cultural heritage, and contributions of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, as well as the many other indigenous communities who called this land home long before us,” Board Member Nick Melvoin, a co-sponsor, said. “Much like the sacred Serra Springs of the Tongva people that now sits on University High School in my district, I

believe it is important not just to preserve native indigenous lands, but to uphold their legacy through the education of our students.”

“Social justice requires federal recognition of the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians,” Board Member Jackie Goldberg, a co-sponsor, said. “They have already been recognized as a sovereign nation by California. Federal acknowledgement is long overdue.”

“As a District, it is important for us to celebrate the diversity of our school communities,” Board Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin said. “We are proud to support this important resolution to formally recognize the history, cultural heritage, and contributions of the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.”

In the meantime, the tribe continues its work to create systemic change in Los Angeles by leveraging education, partnering with urban American Indian organizations and university programs to establish the Tataviam American Indian Education Center and providing support services to American Indian students of all ages living within FTBMI territory.

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