



October 3, 2016

Dr. Donald Evans - Superintendent – Berkeley Unified School District and
Berkeley Unified School District – Board of Directors
2020 Bonar Street
Berkeley CA 94702
Email: boardofed@berkeley.net, Superintendent@berkeley.net

Regarding Yvette Felarca, BUSD Instructor

Dear Dr Evans,

Media Alliance is writing to you today to express concerns about the punitive actions taken towards Yvette Felarca, a teacher in the Berkeley Unified School District. As a Bay Area-based nonprofit organization for 39 years focused on democratic communications, one of our organizational priorities has been the protection of free expression and the right to dissent and protest.

We are alarmed by Ms. Felarca's case because the District's actions, as they have been reported, have been extremely punitive ranging from suspension to the redaction of wages. They appear to be disproportionate to Ms. Felarca's actions, which consisted of participating in a protest and demonstration in Sacramento on her own time.

We understand the District's responsibilities to protect the children in their care from any dangerous situations, but we do not see any evidence that any children enrolled in the Berkeley Unified School District were brought to the protest or otherwise exposed to any physical danger or placed in jeopardy. To the contrary, the major impact on the students of Ms. Felarca has been being pulled by the District into interrogations regarding their teacher, which we can only assume to have been upsetting for the children involved.

Obviously, the protest in Sacramento became somewhat violent, which is unfortunate, but we encourage the Unified School District to recognize that the courts are prepared to deal with such matters appropriately and the BUSD is not a court, much less a judge, jury and executioner and should not place itself in that position.

Our long-time concern is that the District should not try to discourage their employees from participating in demonstrations, protests or social justice-oriented activities for fear of incurring the wrath of the District. We believe that civic engagement is a good thing and that having engaged and aware instructors at BUSD is a gain for the educational aims of the District.

So we would ask you, whatever your disagreements may be with the particular actions Ms. Felarca took on that particular day, to dial down the intensity of the punishment dynamic, to look at the overall track record of the employee, to cease the harassment of the students and to resolve this matter in a way that allows Ms. Felarca to continue teaching, and preserves the right to dissent for all Americans, BUSD teachers included.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tracy Rosenberg
Executive Director
Media Alliance