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Statement from Alex Johnson, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund-California, on LAUSD's new superintendent

CDF-CA is hopeful that new superintendent is committed to addressing the needs of the district's most vulnerable students

In response to the selection of Michelle King to lead Los Angeles Unified School District, Alex Johnson, Executive Director of Children's Defense Fund-California, issued this statement:

"We congratulate Michelle King on her appointment as the new superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and as the first African American woman to lead the nation's second largest district. As a leader who has worked her way up the ranks at LAUSD, Superintendent King understands the district, its challenges and the needs of the more than 600,000 students who call LAUSD home. While LAUSD has made some important progress over the last several years – more students are testing at proficient or advanced in the core subjects on standardized tests, and high school dropout, suspension and expulsion rates are declining – much more work is needed to ensure success for LAUSD's students. The path forward requires greater investments in early childhood education, programs to ensure the effectiveness of professional support and development for teachers and school administrators, and smart budgetary decisions that focus more school district dollars toward classroom needs. Undoubtedly, LAUSD cannot be everything to everyone; but it must be boldly committed to exploring how it can strategically and thoughtfully ensure that the whole child is served and placed on a pathway to succeed in college and have an opportunity for a career.

"We urge Superintendent King to set an example by having ongoing dialogue with students, parents and community organizations, and responding to their issues and concerns with action and in the spirit of cooperation. We are confident that Ms. King is committed to educational equity for our most vulnerable communities, restorative justice and holistic approaches to school climate, increased mental health services for those who experience trauma due to chronic exposure to violence, and health and wellness to ensure all students excel and thrive. With more than 80% of LAUSD students living in poverty, we urge Ms. King to be unsatisfied with satisfactory and proceed with a bold vision that challenges the status quo through an unyielding commitment to fight for our children and their vast needs.

"Children's Defense Fund-California has high expectations for LAUSD and its leaders. But more importantly, our students and their parents have high expectations for us as leaders. We are committed to working with Superintendent King and supporting the district's vision that every student receives a quality education in a safe, caring, and positive environment, and graduate prepared for college and career."

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Children's Defense Fund - California is the California office of the Children's Defense Fund, a non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for over 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.