



Assembly Member **SANDRÉ SWANSON**

News Release

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## Bill To Return Full Local Control To Oakland School District Passes Key Committee

**(Sacramento)** – Citing an unacceptable delay on the part of the State, Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) recently introduced a bill that would complete the transition to local control for the Oakland Unified School District. AB 791 passed the Assembly Education Committee today on a 7-3 vote.

“The Oakland Unified School District received a clean bill of health over four months ago from a State mandated independent auditing firm. However, the State has shown no move to return the final areas of responsibility to the democratically elected school board. It is time to put an end to this stalemate and implement a date certain for the return of local control,” announced Assemblymember Swanson.

AB 791 would mandate that the remaining areas of Financial Management and Pupil Achievement be returned to the District’s board of trustees by July 1 st, 2010, which is the start of the new fiscal year. This would formalize the recommendation of the independent Fiscal Crisis Management and Assistance Team (FCMAT), which conducted a complete audit in December of 2008. Since the District entered State receivership in 2003, FCMAT has conducted regular audits of the District, recommending the return of certain areas of authority as they reached a level of recovery that FCMAT deemed sustainable.

School Board President Alice Spearman and Vice-President Noel Gallo testified before the committee on the need for local control. “We are in the right place and we have the right board to handle our business. We are asking now that we have the authority to make decisions over our academic progress with the students and to make decisions over our financial departments,” said Spearman.

“I think it is long overdue that Oakland regain control over the schools. In the time under receivership, Oakland has met its obligations and met its conditions required by the law,” added Gallo.

Oakland Education Association President Betty Olsen-Jones also spoke in support of AB 791, stating that, “The heart of our democracy is to have the ability of teachers, parents, and students to have a voice in the education of our children. It has been six years. We need our voice back.”

Anna Tourestky, President of American Federation of Teachers Local 1377 echoed Olsen-Jones’ sentiments, “Remaining under state receivership would further an undemocratic process that lacks decision making power by more than a few. I would also add that not only our k-12 students, but our 26,000 adult education students and their families deserve a voice in this process.”

This is not the first time that the State has been slow to return governance, nor Assemblymember Swanson’s first attempt at returning local control. Despite several audits and repeated recommendations to return the area of Board Governance and Community Relations, the State refused to do so. Upon his election to office in December of 2006, Assemblymember Swanson introduced AB 45, which aimed to institute a transparent process for returning control. As a result, the District received its first area of control in July of 2007. A subsequent FCMAT audit, funded at

the request of Assemblymember Swanson in November of 2007, resulted in a recommendation to return Facilities and Personnel. The Superintendent of Public Instruction returned these areas five months later.

“This ongoing stalemate is harmful to the District, and continues to cast doubt on the State’s system of receivership. The community has waited far too long to regain its rightful role in determining the direction of their public education system. With FCMAT’s recommendations, the Superintendent of Public Instruction is free to return authority as quickly as he wants. However, the District and the State will have an end point so that the local board, teachers, parents, and students can get on with the business of directing their schools,” Assemblymember Swanson concluded.

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