

# We Stand with Los Angeles Parents, Teachers and Students: Stop Starving Our Schools!

Last spring, tens of thousands of teachers walked out of their classrooms and into the halls of state capitols to say *'enough!'* to the persistent under-funding of their public schools.

This winter, educators in Los Angeles may be forced to put their shoes to the pavement as well.

United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) has been in contract negotiations with the Los Angeles Unified School District for more than 18 months. In August, 98% of union members voted to authorize a strike, should the district fail to address austerity conditions in their public schools. As the year inches toward its close, the possibility of a strike is growing more certain.

We, the undersigned organizations from across the country, stand with the teachers, parents and students of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles teachers are asking the district to address many of the same issues that we see in our schools every day, in every corner of the nation, from West Virginia and Oklahoma to Arizona and Colorado.

As taxpayers, we promise to fund public schools. We know that high quality public education is the best way to ensure that *all* children have the opportunity to get ahead in life and contribute to our common future. But across the country and in Washington, our leaders repeatedly prioritize tax cuts to the wealthy, corporate profits and privatization over public education. While the rich line their pockets, our schools are starving.

Enough is enough. Los Angeles teachers, parents and students deserve more!

- ✓ Nearly 40% of LA schools have a nurse on hand only one day a week. Psychologists and social workers are in similarly short supply.
- ✓ Teachers can't get by on what they're making. As the cost of living in Southern California continues to skyrocket, some experienced educators have to work two or even three jobs to make ends meet. Most spend hundreds of their own dollars each year for school supplies.
- ✓ Classrooms are so overcrowded that students have to sit on window sills or the floor, and teachers are unable to offer personalized instruction.
- ✓ Too many schools have full-time, armed police officers but not a single college counselor. And the district's racially biased policy of random searches creates a climate of fear and oppression instead of respect and support.

# Broke on Purpose?

Over 90% of Los Angeles Unified School District students are children of color. As the population of Black and Latino students has grown across California, spending on public schools has decreased.

Let's be honest: **education justice is racial justice**. Our school districts are broke on purpose.

Like parents, teachers and community members across the country, LA's teachers are tired of being told by public officials that there isn't enough money.

California is the richest state in the nation, home to more billionaires than any other state. Yet California ranks 43rd out of 50 in per-pupil funding.

Los Angeles Unified has \$1.86 billion in unrestricted reserves that could make an immediate impact on students and classrooms. Why aren't these resources going to the classroom?

Even the teacher's non-economic demands for increased parent input into school budgets, less testing and greater accountability for charter schools are going unaddressed. Instead, the Superintendent—a former investment banker—is promoting a structural reorganization that would further destabilize the district. This so-called “portfolio” reform has been tried in many of our cities, like New Orleans, Philadelphia and Indianapolis. It has ignited parent anger, increased school closings and privatization, increased disparities between schools...and brought no proven benefit in student learning.

Our schools don't need more churn. They need investment in the basics of teaching and learning. They need investment that will build enrollment and strengthen the district instead of dismantling it.

We, the under-signed organizations stand with the United Teachers Los Angeles. We know that the fight being waged in Los Angeles is *our* fight, whether we live in California or Connecticut, Michigan or Maine. We are all L.A.

Signed