



**DR. HILDA MALDONADO**  
Superintendent

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Via Electronic Mail

August 26, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly  
Santa Barbara County Superior Court  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
pkelly@sbcourts.org

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson  
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury  
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

**FILED**  
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA  
**09/15/2026**

Angela Braun, Executive Officer  
BY *Mark Hanson*  
**M. Hanson** Deputy Clerk

**Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report, "Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings"**

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Members of the Grand Jury:

The Santa Barbara Unified School District appreciates the opportunity to respond to the 2025-26 Grand Jury Report on Brown Act compliance at school board meetings. Public participation is central to how we govern, and we are committed to the Brown Act's core principle that the public's business be conducted openly, free of unnecessary barriers. We already conduct our Board meetings with those principles in mind, and we welcome the Grand Jury's careful attention to the way that school boards communicate rights and procedures to the public.

Our responses to each assigned finding and recommendation follow. The Grand Jury did not assign us Findings 2 or 4, or Recommendations 2a, 2b, or 4, and we therefore do not respond to those items.

**Finding 1:** Some education governing boards' agendas and public comment instructions imply that members of the public must complete a speaker card, sign-up sheet, online form, or provide identifying information in order to speak at a public meeting.

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**Response: Disagree partially with an explanation.** We cannot speak to conditions at other governing boards. As applied to us, our practice requires members of the public who wish to be recognized during public comment to complete a speaker card, for reasons of orderly meeting administration described in our response to Recommendation 1 below. Our current speaker card marks address as optional, but not every field on the card and related public comment materials is explicitly marked as optional. We agree that identifying information should be clearly optional, and we will address that in the updates described in our response to Recommendation 1.

**Recommendation 1:** The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1, review agenda language and public comment instructions to plainly state that speaker cards, sign-up sheets, and online forms are optional tools used solely to help organize public comment, and to affirm that any person may address the board during public comment periods without providing a name, address, or other personal identifying information. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

**Response: Will be implemented, with an implementation schedule.** We will update our agenda language, speaker cards, and public comment instructions by December 31, 2026 to make clear that providing a name, address, or other personal identifying information is not required to address the Board during public comment. Every field on our speaker card requesting identifying information will be marked as optional. We will retain the requirement that speakers complete a speaker card, however, so that we can allocate time equitably among speakers and run public comment in an orderly manner. To the extent Recommendation 1 asks us to state the card itself is optional, we will not adopt that portion.

**Finding 3:** Some governing boards provide no way to participate remotely while public comment is officially open.

**Response: Disagree partially with an explanation.** We cannot speak to how other governing boards structure their meetings. As to us, the finding is inaccurate: we provide remote public participation via Zoom while public comment is open at every regular Board meeting.

**Recommendation 3a:** The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1, provide video conferencing for remote participation, which can also be used as a broadcast archive. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

**Response: Has been implemented.** We provide live video of Board meetings via Zoom, allowing members of the public to observe and comment remotely while public comment is open. We record our Board meeting videos and maintain them as a publicly accessible broadcast archive.

**Recommendation 3b:** The Grand Jury recommends that, where remote participation is offered, agendas clearly explain how the public may observe and provide comment remotely at any time public comment is open. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

**Response: Will not be implemented, with an explanation.** Our current agenda cites Education Code § 35145.5 and Government Code § 54954.3, giving members of the public notice of their right to comment on any agenda or non-agenda item within the Board's jurisdiction. Our agenda also provides clear, step-by-step technical instructions for remote participants to access the meeting by Zoom or phone and to unmute themselves when called on to speak.

We maintain a 12:00 p.m. signup cutoff for remote public comment on the day of the meeting, and we decline to remove it. The cutoff serves a concrete administrative purpose: we need to know how many remote speakers to expect in order to allocate time per speaker under Board Bylaw 9323 (which sets a 20-minute limit per item and a 3-minute limit per speaker) and to prepare the speaker list for the Board. Without the cutoff, we cannot run remote public comment in an orderly manner or ensure each speaker receives equitable time. The Brown Act does not require unlimited real-time signup for remote participation; to the contrary, Government Code § 54954.3(b) expressly authorizes reasonable regulations, including limits on speaker time. Our current process makes remote participation clear, accessible, and administratively workable.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's work in reviewing agenda language across the County's education governing boards. The recommendations in the report will help all of us communicate more clearly with the public, and we welcome continued dialogue on how we can strengthen public participation in our Board meetings.

Sincerely,



Dr. Hilda Maldonado

Superintendent

Santa Barbara Unified School District