November 6, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: boardmembers@scusd.net

Santa Clara Unified School District
ATTN: Board of Trustees
1889 Lawrence Road
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Re: Consideration of Ms. Adenwala's Appeal

Dear Santa Clara Unified School District Trustees,

We write again urging you to reject the Revised Notification of Determination Regarding Complaint dated October 20, 2025 ("the Revised Determination") against Kauser Adenwala. The Revised Determination is based on flawed legal reasoning, creates further legal exposure for Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD), and will severely chill the District's ability to educate our students.

We note we did not receive a reply to our letter dated September 15, 2025, raising further concerns about the District's lack of regard for anti-Palestinian racism.

In addition to the concerns expressed in our previous communication, we now write to notify you of the following:

1. Ms. Adenwala's capacity to fairly present her appeal was severely undermined by multiple hours of disinformation, and personal attacks which she sat through during public testimony prior to the closed session of the Board on October 29, 2025. The accusations of Holocaust inversion were untethered from the facts of what took place in Ms. Adenwala's classroom. The barrage of baseless accusations and degrading testimonies implied that Palestinian suffering is unmentionable in a history classroom. This is a fundamentally dehumanizing, anti-Palestinian premise. The Board should have postponed the appeal to avoid forcing Ms. Adenwala to present her case amidst such a dehumanizing climate.

2. The Revised Determination cites an erroneous and inapplicable legal standard when determining that Ms. Adenwala is responsible for discriminatory bias because "A Jewish student **would reasonably feel uncomfortable** hearing this comparison during class." BP 5145.3 does not protect a student from feeling uncomfortable, nor does any other district policy. If this were the legal standard, we could not teach about settler colonialism in the U.S., slavery, redlining, etc. because white students would reasonably feel uncomfortable. Yes, the starvation and bombing of children in Gaza is upsetting, and even more so when

considering historical patterns. But discomfort is inevitable when confronting history and its connection to current events. Discomfort is not the legal standard for discrimination.

3. The Revised Determination applies an erroneous and irrelevant analysis to justify its use of the "State Department" definition of antisemitism – more commonly known as the "IHRA definition." We elaborated at length in our September 15, 2025, letter the many reasons why the IHRA definition has no place as a speech code or other basis for censoring and punishing teachers in an educational setting. The Revised Determination concedes that a federal court struck down the use of the IHRA definition to restrict student speech on a university campus because it violates free speech protections. The Determination finds this federal decision to be inapplicable to the present case in SCUSD, noting that teachers at the secondary school level do not have the same free speech protections as university students. But the fact that the District has an established right to regulate educators' speech in the classroom is undisputed and irrelevant here. Ms. Adenwala is not arguing that she has free speech rights to teach antisemitic content. She is arguing that the IHRA definition is discredited and cannot be used as a standard to determine what is discriminatory in an educational setting because it is overbroad, vague, and hyper-focused on eliminating speech critical of the Israeli state. The Revised Determination provides no answer or other justification for applying a widely discredited definition.

4. The Determination's application of the IHRA definition to the video is illogical and vague, undermining basic due process and common sense. The Revised Determination finds, "Furthermore, Ingram states that she is ashamed of being a Jewish person due to the actions of Israel, **which can be interpreted as holding Jewish people responsible for the actions of the state.**" While it would indeed be a dangerous and antisemitic notion to hold Jewish people across a diverse global diaspora responsible for the actions of the Israeli state, it would also simply be absurd to interpret this video as doing so. The obvious and reasonable interpretation of the video (and Ms. Ingram's statement of shame) is to draw the ***opposite*** conclusion – that Jews oppose the actions of the Israeli state in Gaza, and that such actions should not be attributed to Jewish people.

   It is of course an educator's responsibility to make it clear that Jews are absolutely not responsible for the actions of the Israeli state any more than Muslims are responsible for 9/11 or the human rights violations of Saudi Arabia, etc. This is exactly what Ms. Adenwala was trying to accomplish with the use of the video. It is cynical to interpret the video's inclusion of Jewish opposition to the U.S. and Israeli treatment of Palestinians as holding Jews responsible for Israel's actions, its obvious meaning was the opposite.

The hours of vitriolic public testimony at the October 29, 2025 SCUSD Board Meeting and the Board's October 20, 2025, Revised Determination only darken the shadow of silence and censorship over Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian students and further reinforces the pervasive climate of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian racism in the District. We urge the district to reject the Revised Determination against Ms. Adenwala.

Sincerely,

Council on American-Islamic Relations, California
San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP
Jewish Voice for Peace San Francisco Bay Area