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L.A. CITY ATTORNEY ROCKY DELGADILLO UNVEILS SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN FOR GANG- PLAGUED SOUTH L.A. MIDDLE SCHOOL

*'Mend Markham' Initiative Part of Delgadillo's Plan to Reduce Gang
Violence Around Schools and Keep Kids Safe*

LOS ANGELES – City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, joined by Council Member Janice Hahn, Mothers of Watts founder “Sweet” Alice Harris, and a representative of the Los Angeles Police Department, today detailed an initiative to coordinate new and existing safe schools and anti-gang programs at Markham Middle School, one of the most troubled in Los Angeles.

“Today I am delivering on our commitment to do everything we can to fight gangs, protect our kids, and restore hope to the residents of South Los Angeles by delivering to them the ‘MEND MARKHAM’ Initiative,” said Delgadillo. “This targeted, anti-gang/school safety package is designed to couple existing, effective safe schools and anti-gang programs with new programs to get Markham Middle School back on track.”

Markham Middle School, surrounded by seven criminal street gangs, is widely considered one of the most dangerous campuses in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The South Side Village Boys, South Side Watts Varrio Grape, Grape Street Crips, East Side Village Bloods, Hacienda Bloods, Circle City Piru, and Bounty Hunters street gangs all claim turf around the school, where frequent flare-ups of gang violence make getting an education a challenge for students.

A critical component of Delgadillo’s “Mend Markham” Initiative is the assignment of special gang prosecutors for the Markham Middle School community. Special Assistant City Attorney Tracy Webb and Deputy City Attorney Michelle McGinnis, longtime prosecutors and former teachers, will serve as the point of contact for parents, community leaders, businesses and city agencies attempting to quell the gang violence and crime in the area around Markham.

Webb and McGinnis’ duties will include developing a strategy to keep kids in school, keep local gangs from recruiting Markham students, and to facilitate information sharing between school officials and law enforcement to enable a more immediate response to pressing issues.

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Delgadillo's Operation Bright Future Program – an anti-truancy curriculum designed to hold parents accountable for student attendance, a program already in place at Markham – will be combined with surprise truancy sweeps.

As part of the effort to keep gang members and other criminals away from school property, Delgadillo's office has established Safe School Zones that designate schools, bus stops, and the area within 1,000 feet of schools like Markham as violence-free zones that carry additional penalties for violators. The City Attorney also requests that courts order "Stay Away from School Grounds" provisions in civil gang injunctions in order to allow law enforcement to more easily remove gang elements.

In addition, Delgadillo will sponsor new legislation that would establish sentencing enhancements for gang activities, gang injunction violations, hate crimes, child abuse and drug crimes committed in areas designated as Safe School Zones.

The Mend Markham Initiative will also establish an adoption program, through which officials from the City Attorney's Office will commit to paint the school, clean up garbage from the surrounding community, mentor kids, and participate in other community enhancement activities.

Touching on issues addressed in Delgadillo's anti-gang plan announced last week, the Mend Markham Initiative calls upon the school district to enforce the school's current school uniform requirement in the effort to reduce incidents of gang violence in and around schools by eliminating any conflict stemming from students wearing gang attire. School uniforms also would ensure gang members and others who don't belong on school grounds stand out. Similar school uniform efforts in the City of Long Beach have contributed to a significant reduction in fights and on-campus crime.

Through a grant from Majestic Realty, Delgadillo has secured full funding for school uniforms for all students at Markham.

"My office has secured the uniforms...we hope the school district will meet us halfway and enforce Markham's uniform policy," said Delgadillo. "Because we know school uniforms work. We know they save lives."

Efforts at Markham Middle School are the latest component of Delgadillo's anti-gang action plan, which focuses on partnerships with communities, businesses, and law enforcement; prevention measures to keep at-risk youth in school and out of gangs; suppression measures such as gang injunctions and innovative probationary conditions; and gang eradication through the seizing of gang assets.

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