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CITY ATTORNEY ROCKY DELGADILLO, LAUSD BOARD MEMBER TAMAR GALATZAN DISCUSS SCHOOL UNIFORMS, CAMPUS SAFETY AT VALLEY ROUNDTABLE

LOS ANGELES – In his ongoing effort to improve school campus safety in the City of Los Angeles, City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, the City's chief prosecutor, today joined with Los Angeles Unified School District Board Member Tamar Galatzan to host a roundtable discussion with experts, school officials, and the local community to explore past, present, and future school uniform policies

"As the chief prosecutor for this City, and as a father, I believe our schools must be safe havens for our children, free from crime or violence", said Delgadillo, who has over the past seven years initiated a multitude of school safety programs. "It is essential that we stand together, strengthen communications, pool our resources and share our expertise to ensure the safety of our children."

The City Attorney and Board Member Galatzan were joined today by a number of experts including LAUSD Senior Deputy Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines, LAUSD School Police Chief Larry Manion, representatives of the Los Angeles Police Department, Dr. Ron Avi Astor of the University of Southern California, the Principals of Markham Middle School, Van Nuys Middle School and Cleveland High School, as well as parents, students, and community members.

This diverse assemblage of stakeholders joined together to discuss campus safety issues and the role uniforms play in abating the challenge, past experiences with uniforms, and whether LAUSD should initiate a new, district-wide school uniform mandate in the face of our current gang crisis. Today, in the City of Los Angeles, there are 39,000 gang members – many of whom are harming kids in and around school campuses simply because of the clothes they are wearing.

"I was pleased to co-sponsor this important meeting with City Attorney Delgadillo," said School Board Member Galatzan, a Deputy City Attorney and Neighborhood Prosecutor, who shares the City Attorney's commitment to taking proactive measures to prevent crimes before they occur.

"It's important to explore different options that could make our schools safer and create a more positive learning experience."

California State law currently provides that a school district governing board may adopt a reasonable dress code policy, and/or permit school-wide uniform policies if the policy is necessary for the health and safety of the school environment.

The Los Angeles Unified School District has authorized its schools to implement the district's student dress code and/or establish a student uniform policy. Each individual school may determine whether it wishes to follow the district's student code and/or establish a student uniform policy.

School districts across the nation, in places such as San Diego, Long Beach, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, have implemented successful school uniform policies and report that uniforms have made a positive impact on students and school safety. Reports show that uniforms help maintain discipline at schools by reducing violence and disruptions associated with the wearing of gang colors, create a more serious and scholarly attitude among students toward school and their studies, and help to eliminate socio-economic distinctions.

Last year, City Attorney Delgadillo joined forces with LAUSD and unveiled his Markham Middle School Safety Initiative - a strategic effort aimed at fostering a safer school environment at a school plagued by gang violence, crime, fear and conflict.

A key component of this initiative was mandatory school uniforms. The City Attorney's office provided all 1600 students at Markham with two sets of school uniforms to wear as part of a mandatory uniform program. Today, Markham boasts a 95% school uniform compliance rate, even though the District provides for an opt-out policy. Since then, overall arrests for criminal activity on campus have declined by 48%.

"School uniforms by themselves will not solve all school safety problems, but they are an essential contributing factor to discipline and safety," said Delgadillo. "In light of the growing number of criminal street gangs and the violence they pose to our students, our schools, and the areas around them, the time has come to toughen up the district's uniform policy, including mandating uniforms across local districts."

Markham's school uniform policy was implemented in conjunction with effective after-school programs, anti-truancy measures, conflict-resolution training, increased parental involvement, increased law enforcement attention and better policing.

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