April 6, 2011

TO: Santa Clara County Board of Education

FROM: Charles Weis, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Adoption of Resolution in Support of Senate Constitutional Amendment 5 (Simitian)

Background

At the request of member Di Salvo, a resolution in support of Senate Constitutional Amendment (SCA) 5 (Simitian) is being brought to the County Board of Education for consideration.

SCA 5 would allow local school districts to approve a local parcel tax with a 55 percent majority rather than the two-thirds majority currently required. By lowering the threshold, more school districts will be able to successfully pass a local parcel tax, which will help them raise the money they need to maintain a quality education. SCA 5 still requires a supermajority in passing a tax.

SCA 5 would place a constitutional amendment before the voters providing an opportunity to lower the threshold for parcel taxes to 55 percent.

Given the State’s on-going financial crisis, school districts are now facing severe cutbacks in funding. Worse still, it is unlikely that the State will be able to provide adequate funds in the foreseeable future. Now more than ever, school districts need to find ways to help them maintain a consistent quality of education. SCA 5 gives school districts much-needed flexibility in raising local educational funds.

Fiscal Implications

The passage of this resolution would increase revenue in school districts.

Requested Action

Adopt the resolution in support of SCA 5 (Simitian).
WHEREAS, Senate Constitutional Amendment 5 (Simitian), which reduces the two-thirds vote requirement on parcel taxes, will be acted on by the California State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, reductions in the state General Fund revenue have led to reduced school funding; and

WHEREAS, state General Fund revenue is unstable and erratic, which results in unpredictable funding levels for school districts and county offices of education; and

WHEREAS, parcel tax revenue can provide a stable, predictable source of school revenue; and

WHEREAS, passage of SCA 5 will empower local voters to invest in their schools based on the needs of their communities by requiring a tough, but fair 55 percent vote to pass local parcel taxes, while protecting taxpayers and homeowners with accountability provisions that will ensure that funds generated from parcel taxes are not wasted or mismanaged; and

WHEREAS, revenue from parcel taxes can be spent according to local priorities and are not subject to state control; and

WHEREAS, the two-thirds vote requirements results in minority rule by requiring two “yes” votes to cancel out one no vote; and

WHEREAS, passage of SCA 5 will allow local voters to decide to make investments in their neighborhood schools in addition to state funding; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Santa Clara County Board of Education strongly urges the California State Legislature to support and adopt SCA 5.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Santa Clara County Board of Education at a meeting held on April 6, 2011 by the following vote:

AYES: President Di Salvo, Vice President Chang, members Hover-Smoot, Song, Beauchman, Mann and Mah

NOES: - none-

ABSTAIN: -none-

ABSENT: -none-

Signed by:

Charles Weis, Ph.D
County Superintendent of Schools

Joseph Di Salvo, President
Santa Clara County Board of Education