



CITY OF SANTA ANA

**OFFICE OF MAYOR
VALERIE AMEZCUA**

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Dear Orange County Board of Education,

I am writing on behalf of the City of Santa Ana to express my full support for the Resolution Supporting Access to Bilingual Education (drafted by Sailee Charlu). As a leader in one of the most linguistically diverse cities in California, where 96% of residents identify as Hispanic/Latino, I see every day the urgent need for equitable bilingual instruction. According to the California Department of Education (2024), 20.3% of California students are English Language Learners, yet only 8–9% of schools statewide offer dual-immersion programs. Students in Santa Ana, in particular, would greatly benefit from expanded access to instructional models proven to help them succeed.

Extensive research from Stanford University, RAND Corp, and the Public Policy Institute of California shows that dual-language immersion significantly improves reading proficiency, literacy growth, long-term English mastery, and graduation and college-readiness rates. These programs have even been shown to help English Learners outperform their peers in English-only programs by 15–22 percentage points and reach proficiency one to three years earlier. Beyond the data, dual-language immersion strengthens academic confidence, cultural pride, and civic identity. These values resonate deeply with Santa Ana's mission and the needs of our community.

I am seeing these benefits firsthand through programs such as Habla Arte and The Lit League. Habla Arte is a bilingual visual arts and public speaking program that allows elementary students to express themselves creatively through drawing, painting, and presenting their ideas aloud. The Lit League is a bilingual spoken-poetry program that empowers middle school students to channel their developing voices into public performance and authentic storytelling. Created and led by Santa Ana youth (Sailee Charlu) and implemented in our Title I schools, these programs have served more than 2,000 students and have contributed to measurable increases in literacy engagement, public-speaking confidence, and academic comfort among English Learners. These community programs reaffirm what the research consistently shows: when students feel valued, safe, and supported in their linguistic identity, they thrive academically.

This Bilingual Education Resolution acknowledges what data and lived experience make clear: bilingual education is a powerful and effective tool for achieving educational

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equity. It represents an investment in academic success, civic empowerment, and long-term economic mobility for students from immigrant and multilingual households. The OCBE's commitment to expanding access to bilingual instructors, supporting curriculum development, and providing equitable resources for Title I schools aligns strongly with Santa Ana's ongoing efforts to uplift our youth.

I fully support and strongly encourage the Board to advance and adopt this resolution. Its passage would demonstrate the OCBE's dedication to educational excellence, cultural inclusivity, and the success of students who rely on us to create the conditions they need to thrive.

Thank you for your commitment to elevating bilingual education as a pillar of educational equity in Orange County schools.



Valerie Amezcua
Mayor of the City of Santa Ana