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Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 3 million members of the National Education Association, which includes our nation's teachers, aspiring educators, retired educators, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, librarians, and higher education faculty and staff, we are proud to support the nomination of Cindy Marten as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education.

Marten, superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District, is a former classroom teacher and urban principal who now leads the second largest district in the State of California, and as such, she is uniquely equipped to help our nation provide the opportunities that all students deserve to learn and thrive. As an educator, Superintendent Marten possesses the vast classroom, administrative, and personal experience to effectively support the department in managing its K-12 policies, intergovernmental and stakeholder activities, and English language learners programming.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, Marten has worked closely with families and educators to follow science and keep the community safe. She established her own panel of scientific experts from the University of California in San Diego and launched her own testing program based on the panel's guidance and input from the California Teachers Association (CTA). The testing plan and gradual reopening of schools were widely supported by families, educators, and the community, including local school board members. In addition, as schools transitioned to remote learning, Marten continued her longstanding commitment to professional development by ensuring that all educators were provided an extra week of training at the beginning of the school year to help them take their craft online with confidence.

Under Marten's leadership, the Learning Policy Institute credited the district's dedication and prioritization of hiring and retaining qualified, experienced teachers as a driver of improving student outcomes, particularly for students of color. San Diego Unified also is committed to racial justice and community empowerment, ensuring the continuation of related programs even during the pandemic. It is notable that Marten spearheaded and hosted a Freedom Summer series of board workshops, which resulted in plans to reimagine school police and the

creation of a racial equity oversight committee for all hiring. Other community-centered work included a dramatic plan to address food insecurity, which has provided close to 10 million free meals to needy families since the start of the pandemic.

In addition to her work supporting students and educators throughout the pandemic and furthering the district's commitment to racial and social justice, Marten's career features several highlights that demonstrate her experience with coordinating federal policy, responding to student needs, and providing instructional leadership. Please consider the following achievements:

- As the principal of an urban school for a decade, Marten learned the importance of social and emotional learning and trauma-informed approaches to education. She has taken her experience opening a community health clinic at her school to expand student support services districtwide. During her tenure, San Diego Unified has launched a community schools initiative to deepen the bonds between school leaders and the families they serve.
- Her emphasis on social and emotional learning, and an approach that values recognizing, understanding, and attempting to meet the full spectrum of a child's needs, has led Marten to de-emphasize high-stakes standardized testing, instead focusing on classroom-based learning and assessments. Nevertheless, standardized test scores for the district climbed steadily under Superintendent Marten's leadership, prompting the head of the Council of Great City Schools to call San Diego Unified the nation's fastest improving school system.
- Outpacing every other participating urban district in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing, the Learning Policy Institute also found African American and Latino students within San Diego Unified outperformed their peers statewide. The UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools found these improvements were the direct result of Superintendent Marten's focus on equity-based budgeting.
- Marten has demonstrated her familiarity with federal education policies and issues, drafting a plan to help rebuild public education in the aftermath of the tenure of Secretary Betsy DeVos. She believes deeply in ensuring every student in the country has access to a bright future and has organized a series of policy recommendations in the "National Response to Persevere and to Prioritize School Recovery with Equity and Undoing Learning Loss." These recommendations are currently available [on the San Diego Unified website](#).

Inheriting a system known for rapid turnover in the Superintendent's Office, Marten has established a reputation for stability and leading a complex system collaboratively. San Diego Unified is a majority-minority district (53 percent African American and Latino) and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of all students qualify for free and reduced lunch status based on family

income. Marten currently oversees an \$8.4 billion bond program, which consistently receives the highest possible marks from Wall Street ratings agencies.

In a sign of faith in her leadership, voters previously endorsed Marten's plan to issue the largest bond in city educational history. These resources provided significant funding for school facility renovations, repairs and safety upgrades, the reduction of lead in drinking water and new facilities for athletics, visual or performing arts and career or technical education. In addition, to support the growing population of San Diego Unified immigrant students, Marten established close ties with leaders from the Mexican American, Somali-American and other New Americans communities. To further demonstrate the district's commitment to immigrant students and families, Marten ensured the establishment of the district's own office to facilitate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications.

Cindy Marten has demonstrated a successful and fruitful commitment to educating all students, collaborating with families, educators, and the community, and advancing a comprehensive policy agenda that nurtures and fully supports students. We share her philosophy that "creating educational conditions that enable all children to become actively literate, contributing and participating members of a democratic society" can make a positive difference in the world, and we believe she would be an outstanding Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association