



May 15, 2026

Dear SMMUSD Board Members:

Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights (SMRR) is writing to express its support for the following three requests advanced by various community members and community groups regarding the fields and land sites under SMMUSD's control that serve the educational and recreational needs of both our community's students and Santa Monicans in general.

First, SMRR supports the request that no new artificial turf fields be installed at SMMUSD's elementary school sites. SMRR views this a modest request aimed at maximizing protection for the most vulnerable portion of our student community. This request is consistent with (albeit more limited than) the ban on new artificial turf recently adopted by the Santa Monica City Council for all facilities under its jurisdiction. While SMRR always remains open to learning and considering new information on this issue (or any issue), SMRR is satisfied—based on the information presented during the community and Santa Monica City Council processes to date—that the requested elementary school ban on new artificial turf fields is a reasonable and appropriate public policy.¹

Second, SMRR supports the request that SMMUSD investigate the feasibility of developing additional fields on SMMUSD land sites, at least on a temporary basis. SMRR recognizes the importance of fields to community well-being, and that the current field supply is tight. SMRR also recognizes that grass fields are not able to sustain the 24/7/365 use that artificial turf essentially provides, and therefore recognizes that precluding new turf fields even at the elementary school sites alone will further constrain the already tight supply of field space available to our students and the broader community. It therefore is prudent to investigate the opportunity for and feasibility of creating new fields on SMMUSD land sites.

Of course, SMRR further recognizes that there may be competing potential future uses for SMMUSD land sites that, when implemented, might preclude using all or a portion of those same sites for fields. For example, SMRR has long pressed the SMMUSD Board to use some of its land sites to create housing affordable to teachers, service and maintenance workers, and other SMMUSD employees who are unable to find housing in our City. This is important not only as a matter of equity, and as a means of continuing to assure Santa Monica can attract the best talent for our schools, but also because it presents a critical teaching moment. As parents ourselves, we are well aware that children learn most about values from what we do, and not from what we say. Demonstrating with concrete action that we are willing to make sacrifices to help people of all

¹ SMRR has not been requested to take a position on a ban on artificial turf at any other sites.

economic levels live in our community—including most especially those whose work is already providing benefits to all of us—is essential to passing on true Santa Monica values of fairness and inclusion to our next generation.

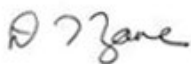
But this does not mean that SMMUSD should not explore the potential to use its land sites to create more fields on either a temporary or a permanent basis. For example, while the Fourth Street garage site has been approved for a new deed-restricted affordable housing project, the City has turned that site into temporary pickleball courts for use in the interim period before actual construction is ready to begin. And with respect to the Airport site, SMRR advocates for only a small portion of the land to be used for below market rate housing, and for the vast majority of the land to be used to create a Great Park. The point is that just because SMMUSD land sites may some day in the future be used for below market rate housing or any other non-field uses does not automatically preclude either its temporary use as a field or its partial permanent use as a field.

SMRR also recognizes that creating new fields would require financial resources. But SMRR has consistently worked for decades to provide additional financial resources to SMMUSD through bond measures, parcel taxes measures, sales taxes measures, transfer tax measures, and city general funds, and will not hesitate to do so in the future when appropriate to do so. In other words, the mere fact that new fields on SMMUSD land sites would require financial resources does not automatically preclude consideration of the idea.

In the end, an informed decision regarding whether to devote any SMMUSD land sites to new fields depends on the results of an investigation into the opportunity and feasibility of doing so (including an evaluation of the costs, and an evaluation of what other uses of the money and the land would or would not be precluded by creating new fields on those land sites). SMRR therefore supports the request for such an investigation.

Third, SMRR supports the request that SMMUSD participate in the pilot program the City of Santa Monica is undertaking to evaluate the best approaches to natural grass fields, and their relative cost-effectiveness compared to artificial turf fields. SMRR has been advised that the request is not for a financial contribution by SMMUSD to the pilot program. Rather, it is a request that it participate with the City in pilot project design and evaluation so that it does not become necessary for SMMUSD to expend additional funds or time in order to obtain data it finds credible and necessary to support future decisions on how best to create and/or manage grass fields, and whether to take future actions further limiting the use of artificial turf. Effective coordination between SMMUSD and the City (as well as Santa Monica Community College) to the extent reasonably possible, in an effort to avoid wasteful duplication of data development, seems eminently prudent to SMRR.

Thank you for considering our views on these matters.



Denny Zane
Co-Chair, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights



Mike Soloff
Co-Chair, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights