

1 Center (“LLC”) for K-12 students, National Summer School Initiative (“NSSI”) for
2 3rd-8th grade students, and the Family Sustainability Center (“FSC”). The FSC
3 provided families with socio-economic and academic workshops so that, despite
4 the pandemic, they could thrive and not simply survive. Participants went through
5 a needs assessment, partnered with a Family Liaison, and received individual
6 guidance, seminars, and connections to needed services. In parallel, as part of the
7 LLC, families and children participated in a regular schedule of classes, taught by
8 skilled teachers, and had access to video lessons anytime. Families who
9 successfully completed Phase I also received a stipend of up to \$500/ household.

10 7. Phase I of the Hub was a huge success. Attendance for students in
11 kindergarten through second grade was 83%, compared to only 35% at Oakland
12 Unified School District (“OUSD”) during spring distance learning. 60% of the
13 students in the REACH’s K-2 five-week summer literacy programming moved 2 or
14 more levels on the district-wide reading assessment; 30% of students moved 3 or
15 more levels.

16 8. The Hub’s second phase launched in fall 2020. Since then, we have
17 employed 19 Family Liaisons to work through the Hub, more than double the
18 number we hired over the summer, to support over 350 students and their
19 parents. About half of our Family Liaisons are bilingual. Family Liaisons provide
20 social, academic, and technical support so that the families can access and engage
21 with their schools’ distance learning offerings.

22 9. Monday – Thursday between 3-5pm, we offer high-quality academic
23 and social enrichment courses and tutoring in literacy, science, math, arts
24 education, and more. We are also collecting real-time data about our families’
25 experiences with distance learning on a weekly basis, and offering afterschool
26 synchronous academic and social enrichment programs.

27 **III. The Digital Divide**

28 10. Since the filing of this case, we have continued to provide a significant
amount of resources to support families as they navigate remote learning. When

1 students received school computers, we quickly realized that the devices alone
2 were not enough. To this day, we are still showing parents how to use Zoom. The
3 families we work with are not familiar with technology and get overwhelmed
4 when their devices lag or start to malfunction in other ways. This is why we have
5 continued to work with parents one-on-one so that they feel confident handling
6 technology issues when they arise.

7 11. Parents across the state need access to similar, individualized support
8 so that students do not miss out on any more instruction time. The state should
9 provide IT support and have staff on call that can assist parents step by step, the
10 same way we have been doing it. Without this individualized guidance, school
11 computers simply are not enough to address the digital divide for families with the
12 highest needs.

13 12. Additionally, school issued computers are not sufficient for students
14 beyond middle school. School-issued computers are slow and unreliable. Students
15 in higher grade levels cannot use these devices for more rigorous courses such as
16 AP computer science or media arts and graphic design. Students from financially
17 stable households have access to personal devices that many of our students do
18 not. This digital divide requires that all students have access to the most adequate
19 and reliable technology.

20 13. The parent leaders in our organization know firsthand the devastating
21 impacts of COVID on children's academic experiences. Their children rely
22 tremendously on the supplementary resources at The Oakland REACH to fill in the
23 gaps that their teachers cannot. Our parents themselves feel frustrated because
24 many of them are not familiar with the digital world, and this has been a huge
25 learning curve for them. When their children received school computers, no one
26 thought about whether parents, grandparents, and other caretakers were familiar
27 with technology or what being in charge of a child's education at home would
28 entail. Parents have to supervise multiple students of different ages and grade
levels at once while at the same time adjusting to a digital world.

1 14. I know that for the families that do not have access to resources like
2 The Oakland REACH, this means a tremendous learning loss for their children. Our
3 students were already struggling even before the pandemic, but this situation has
4 made things worse. We continue to support our families with after-school tutoring
5 and enrichments and tutoring tailored to families schedules. UC Berkeley's
6 Lawrence Hall of Science, for example, has provided our students with hands-on
7 science courses after school. The State needs to be thinking about how to address
8 this learning loss now – not how it will address it eventually.

9 15. When we conducted a survey of our parent members in November, we
10 found that many families did not want to return to in-person classes. One fear was
11 the rising numbers of COVID in predominantly Black and Latinx communities. The
12 other aspect is that parents like the support they are receiving at The REACH. We
13 have been able to build and sustain trust with our families because everyone
14 continues to work with a family liaison that helps them troubleshoot issues
15 concerning remote learning. Parents never had this type of support prior to COVID.
16 We also found that 14% of the families we work with responded that they feel
17 distance learning was serving them better than traditional schooling. I know this
18 is in part due to the consistent and individualized guidance they receive at The
19 REACH.

20 16. Individualized support continues to be an important aspect of what
21 makes our virtual hub so successful. Our parents feel less stressed and better
22 equipped to engage with their children's education. As a result, students also feel
23 more support and reassured that that there is always someone ready to advocate
24 on their behalf. The one positive impact of remote learning is that parents get a
25 better chance of becoming involved with their children's education, and we want
26 to make sure that as many parents as possible have the tools necessary to do this.

27 **IV. The Oakland REACH's Platform**

28 17. At the Oakland REACH, we have a four-point platform for building up
technology infrastructure within families and closing the digital divide.

1 18. The first part of our strategy is hardware. Families need strong
2 technology infrastructure, including devices for every child and multiple hotspots
3 as backup connectivity for the household.

4 19. The second part is broadband internet access. Hotspots are not
5 sufficient or reliable enough to guarantee that children have access to their virtual
6 classrooms. Hotspots need to be considered as backup connectivity. Our families
7 need broadband internet access to fully access learning for their children, and they
8 will continue to need it after official school reopening.

9 20. Third, we need proactive family technology trainings to build power
10 and agency with families in this area. We are in the process of surveying our
11 families about how technology trainings can build their skills in becoming power
12 agents in supporting their children’s education and just their overall life
13 sustainability. Technology is our future and our families deserve to be in the game.

14 21. The last part of our strategy is tech support so that families have
15 somewhere to go when they have issues with technology. This is essential during
16 the pandemic so that our families can get back online when their devices or
17 software are not functioning. Many families did not have computers and some no
18 internet access as well. Integrating technology into homes requires a tech support
19 infrastructure to help families troubleshoot issues. The Hub has successfully been
20 providing tech support remotely to families all year.

21 **V. School Reopening**

22 22. This spring, we conducted a family survey to find out how our families
23 are doing and what they need. From the survey, we learned that 50% of our
24 families do not plan to send their kids back to school this school year. The other
25 50% prefer a model where kids are at school for full days, either a couple of times
26 a week (a hybrid learning model) or all five days a week (a full return to the
27 classroom). Parents do not want their children to go back to school if they are only
28 there a couple hours a day for a few days a week—schedules like that are very
disruptive and they don’t offer kids a meaningful amount of time in the classroom.

1 23. We are keeping these survey results in mind as we prepare for the
2 summer and for the next academic year. 75% of our families said they would be
3 signing up for our summer programming. Of these families, 85% said that they
4 want to have their kids participate in outdoor activities. Based on that feedback,
5 we are currently designing a summer program that is primarily virtual in
6 academics but also has some outdoor activities. We are gearing up to serve up to
7 1,000 students this summer – that’s 800 more students than we served last
8 summer! Our families have spoken; they want this and we are going to deliver. We
9 are also working on a plan to expand the Hub model for the next academic year. If
10 a significant portion of our families are not going to send their children back to
11 school in-person, we want to be able to offer them a full-day program through the
12 Hub.

13 24. With all of the attention on school reopening, I am concerned that the
14 State is forgetting about families’ technology needs, which are still unmet and still
15 important because families are choosing to keep their children at home. Some of
16 the computers students received from their schools are getting older and need
17 repairs. Many of our families still do not have broadband internet access. Although
18 the State is also going to receive funds from the federal government to expand
19 internet coverage, we are concerned that those funds will not be spent in a way
20 that improves Wi-Fi service so that it meets families’ needs. And parents still need
21 more help to learn how to use technology themselves: devices and connectivity are
22 not enough if our families don’t know how to use them.

23 25. We are launching a technology fellowship this summer that will teach
24 families computer skills and provide them with a new Chromebook. Over 100 of
25 our families have signed up for the fellowship. We will have to fundraise in order
26 to offer the program to so many families, but it will be worth it. Parents need their
27 own devices and they need to be comfortable with technology so that they can
28 engage in their own learning and work to sustain and support their families.

1 26. Through the Hub model, we've found a way to adapt the school
2 system to the needs of our families. Our organization has moved mountains for
3 Black and Latinx families, but the reality is that most students in our State do not
4 have access to our programming and resources. That is why we believe that virtual
5 programming like ours and our technology platform must be adopted and made
6 accessible for all students throughout the State.

7
8 I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in
9 Oakland, California on ^{04/22/2021} _____, 2021.

10
11 *Lakisha Young*

12 _____
13 LAKISHA YOUNG
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UPDATED - Declaration of Lakisha Young

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1 6. Since the pandemic began, we have significantly increased the amount of
2 resources allocated to serve students and families as they navigate remote learning. In
3 May and June 2020, CoCo conducted a needs assessment in response to COVID-19 and
4 found that families did not have the technology or support necessary to access remote
5 learning programs offered by their schools. According to a recent study by the
6 University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education, 60% of South Los
7 Angeles homes rely on mobile broadband. Another 17% of households in the area do
8 not have internet access at all.

9 7. CoCo’s organizers have talked with students and parents every day since
10 distance learning began. Through the needs assessment and conversations, CoCo
11 learned that school districts were failing to provide parents with the information they
12 needed to insure that their children had access to remote learning.

13 8. Not only did students have to adjust to not seeing their friends and teachers
14 every day, but many also started taking on parental roles to help younger siblings with
15 remote learning needs. Many of the parents we work with cannot afford to stay home
16 because they work in low-wage, essential jobs. When these parents cannot stay home
17 to support remote learning, older siblings set aside their own coursework to help
18 younger ones flesh out technical and connectivity issues.

19 9. The families we work with only received one hotspot device from their
20 schools, even those that have multiple students doing distance learning in the household.
21 This means that there could be several students trying to connect to their online classes
22 at once. A single hotspot device is not sufficient for this. Students need reliable
23 connectivity as well as tech support so they can spend more time in class instead of
24 trying to figure out technical issues. We have heard from students who have missed
25 classes and who have been marked as absent even after several attempts to log in. Even
26 when students can join a class meeting, they may be cut off or experience issues with
27 audio because most of the Google Chromebooks they received from their schools are
28 out dated and run slow systems.

1 10. Additionally, students are struggling with their socio-emotional wellbeing.
2 Families need guidance to manage the emotional and psychological toll of COVID.
3 Everyone that we have spoken with either has been sick with COVID themselves or has
4 had someone in their family get sick. Some families have loved ones in the hospital or
5 are in mourning. Our students are having to deal with this all while knowing that their
6 parents, siblings, and other members of their households risk exposure every time they
7 go to work. This is why schools should have tools and qualified personnel to address
8 students' mental health. Students can't learn while they're having to process all of these
9 things with no support.

10 11. I have not heard of any students receiving direct support from their school
11 for mental health counseling or guidance. One way to help struggling students right now
12 would be to bring them together in small groups with safety guidelines in place. These
13 groups could mimic the learning pods that we have heard about in wealthier areas. With
14 all of their school campuses sitting empty, it seems like there should be enough space
15 to allow students to come together in small groups, even if it were only for a short period
16 once a week. Students have spent an entire year without any social and physical
17 interactions with their friends, and many of them are showing signs of emotional
18 distress and lack of motivation.

19 12. In December 2020, we met with parents to gather feedback about the
20 resources we provided to help them with remote learning and the challenges that their
21 students were still facing. The parents we spoke with shared ongoing frustrations
22 concerning their children's emotional regulation, stress management, hardware issues,
23 and homeschool management. Parents were also frustrated because they were, and still
24 are, dealing with a lot – homeschooling, COVID exposure, rent debt, food insecurity,
25 and more. They all shared this sentiment of heaviness and were overwhelmed with the
26 increasing number of COVID infections in their community.

27 13. Another thing that kept coming up during these discussions with parents
28 were children in need of blue light glasses. Students are spending significantly more
time in front of computers and tablets to complete coursework. Some students are even

1 suffering from headaches due to this prolonged screen time. We had one grandmother
2 who took her grandchild to the doctor frequently because his vision was strained and he
3 needed glasses. Yet many of our families cannot afford to purchase blue light glasses
4 that would protect children's eyes and vision. During our holiday toy giveaway, we
5 heard from many parents that they would prefer getting blue light glasses instead of
6 toys. One parent was so stressed about this that she was thinking of pulling her children
7 out of school altogether.

8 14. Most of our funding comes from philanthropy or through grants that we
9 apply to as part of our internal mutual aid support. Our limited budget does not allow
10 us to provide devices, tech support, or blue light glasses for all the students that may
11 need them. It is unfortunate that we are more than a year into distance learning and
12 students everywhere still do not have all the tools necessary to learn effectively at home.

13 15. All of these stressors are especially concerning for high school seniors. A
14 lot of students rely on individual support from academic counselors to navigate the
15 college application process. However, many of our students have not been able to
16 establish regular communication with their counselors and cannot ask them questions
17 about college requirements or financial aid. As students receive acceptances from
18 colleges and universities they need guidance on how to select the best option for them
19 and how to pay for it. A lot of our students will be the first in their families to go to
20 college so they cannot ask their parents or other family members for help. Our students
21 need help understanding acceptance letters, financial aid packages, commuting options,
22 etc.

23 **III. CoCo Supports Remote Learning**

24 16. Many things would help students right now. The digital divide continues
25 to be an issue but is something that should have been resolved by now. This is one of
26 the most pressing needs, and at the very minimum students need to be connected.
27 Families with more than one child need more than one hotspot to support several video
28 calls happening at once. If hotspots are insufficient, then families should receive free
broadband internet.

1 17. Based on the results from our needs assessments from the summer of 2020,
2 CoCo diverted significant organizational resources to counteract the State’s failures to
3 deliver an education to students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 18. Staff and organizers purchased a total of 206 laptops, and also opened their
5 offices to conduct in-person student meetings which required paying for additional
6 cleaning, personal protective equipment, staff trainings on social distancing, and Lyft
7 rides.

8 19. In July and August 2020, CoCo offered a virtual summer academic
9 program for 100 students, grades 4-12 to target three areas of support: academics,
10 technology, and wellness. The organization hired five trained and certified credentialed
11 teachers, a team of tutors to provide individualized support for students, and an
12 additional teacher to help students with special needs.

13 20. The program teachers taught students math and English lessons daily.
14 CoCo’s summer program included individual meetings with students and families to
15 support technology setup and troubleshooting. CoCo’s staff showed students how to
16 use Google Classroom and taught parents how to use the platform Schoology to track
17 their children’s academic progress.

18 21. The summer program also included a parent component offering weekly
19 wellness support workshops led by licensed psychologists.

20 22. More recently, we identified partners in South Los Angeles offering in-
21 person learning pods to address the learning loss due to school closures. We secured
22 funding to provide our families with vouchers for these learning pods that they
23 otherwise would not have access to. We are collaborating with YMCA-Crenshaw and
24 Kumon centers to offer learning pod options to our families.

25 23. YMCA-Crenshaw welcomed CoCo’s families into its learning pods in
26 February. The partnership launched on February 3, 2021, with the in-person access
27 beginning on February 10, 2021. This learning pod addresses the need for a safe
28 learning space, with in-person help during the day while parents work. This learning
pod site also has 100 laptops on hand to provide for students who need them. Similarly,

1 Kumon offers in-person tutoring for students twice a week. Both of these programs
2 follow COVID-19 safety protocols.

3 24. Based on the informal focus groups we held during December, we created
4 a 5-week workshop series for parents. The workshops were led by myself, and our two
5 Wellness Specialists who are also school psychologists. The workshops focused on
6 topics concerning mental health, learning disabilities, stress management, and parent
7 advocacy. We had over 130 parents attend the workshops regularly. This was the first
8 time our programming reached such high attendance and engagement, which to me,
9 only speaks to the need for these type of resources and services.

10 **IV. School Reopening**

11 25. LA Unified is now preparing to open early education centers and
12 elementary schools in mid-April. Middle and high schools will be reopening by late
13 April. While this is a good step forward, we want to ensure that parents feel ready and
14 safe to send their children back. Students and parents can choose to remain online or
15 participate in hybrid learning. Parents will also have the opportunity to update their
16 selection every two weeks if they so choose.

17 26. With school reopening soon, at CoCo we worry about what this will look
18 like for students that have fallen behind or remained largely absent throughout the past
19 year due to competing priorities. We need schools to have well thought out processes
20 and resources to meet each student where they are at in terms of academic and mental
21 needs. The parents we work with would like to see smaller class sizes when students
22 return so that teachers can better assess and support with learning loss. Parents are also
23 worried that their students may not get the support they need to process the stress and
24 trauma this pandemic has brought on.

25 27. For the students and parents that chose to remain online, we would like to
26 see substantial investments to improve distance learning. Just as we have been providing
27 them for the families we serve, all schools need increased support to provide more
28 tutoring and counselors. We would also encourage all schools to implement targeted
efforts to reengage students with chronic absences.

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