

FAIR Responses to ROUND ROCK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT “Resolution
Condemning Actions That Divide Our Community and Incite Hatred”

WHEREAS, the United States has a rich history of immigration from nations all over the world, creating diverse communities throughout the country, including the Round Rock Independent School District; and

FAIR Response: *We agree that it is important to celebrate our country’s history as a nation of immigrants.*

WHEREAS, as a Board of Trustees, we recognize and celebrate the diversity in our community, and believe diverse cultural perspectives can inspire creativity, drive innovation and stamp out discrimination; and

FAIR Response: *We agree that it is important to celebrate diversity in our community. We also believe that it is essential to foster a diversity of cultural perspectives, as well as political and ideological perspectives.*

WHEREAS, as a Board of Trustees, we recognize and acknowledge that our community and state have historically struggled with issues of race, equality, and prejudice and

FAIR Response: *We acknowledge that our community and state, like others in America and throughout the world, have not always been as welcoming of racial diversity as we are today. We agree that it is important for us to continue to strive as a community to treat everyone as individuals, and to advocate against treating people differently based on the color of their skin.*

WHEREAS, Round Rock ISD is a richly diverse community with more than 90 languages spoken in our schools; and

FAIR Response: *We agree that it is important to celebrate the diversity in our community.*

WHEREAS, in Round Rock ISD we are committed to creating an environment where all children can succeed, all feel welcome, and all are valued; and

FAIR Response: *We agree that all children deserve to feel welcome and be valued at Round Rock schools.*

WHEREAS, we recognize there is much work to be done in securing social justice for all; and

FAIR Response: *We are concerned that the language used in this line is not specific enough. Precise definitions are necessary to clarify for the Board members what they are voting on and what the community can expect should the resolution pass. For example, it is important to*

define “social justice,” since there are many different interpretations of this term that often conflict with one another. It is also essential that the proposed “work” be clearly defined as well. Clarity is essential so that a truly informed decision can be made in the best interests of all Round Rock students.

WHEREAS, recently there has arisen in the United States a growing number of groups and individuals who threaten our democracy by seeking to divide our community and incite hatred; and

***FAIR Response:** We acknowledge that political polarization is a serious problem, and that we should work together to try to find common ground to preserve a healthy community and democracy. However, the language used in this line is not specific about which groups and individuals it refers to. We urge the Board of Trustees to clarify the persons and groups to whom it refers, not only to avoid confusion for the voting Board members and community, but also to assuage the concerns of those who believe they are being targeted for speech that is protected by the First Amendment.*

WHEREAS, the Round Rock ISD Board of Trustees rejects and condemns all such groups and individuals whose ideologies are based on hate, violence, divisiveness, and intolerance, and

***FAIR Response:** We agree in principle with the Board that ideologies based on hate, violence, divisiveness, and intolerance must be challenged. But it is essential that the Board be specific about which ideologies and individuals it refers to, so as to prevent any inadvertent violations of parents’ and other concerned individuals’ Constitutionally protected speech.*

WHEREAS, the Round Rock ISD Board of Trustees wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the wellbeing and safety of Black, Indigenous, LatinX, Jewish, Muslim, Arab, Asian American, Pacific Islander and LBGTQI communities and stands against hate speech and acts that target them.

***FAIR Response:** We agree with the Board that every student should have the right to feel physically safe at Round Rock schools. Likewise, we stand against violence and other hateful acts that target members of those communities. The term “hate speech,” however, should be defined so as not to inadvertently include speech that is protected by the First Amendment.*

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of the Round Rock Independent School District that any groups and individuals who promote hate, violence, discord and intolerance are rejected and condemned and will not interfere with the Board of Trustees’ efforts to address, engage and lead the District on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion and to promote a deeper shared understanding of our community.

***FAIR Response:** As mentioned in several of the clauses above, many of the terms used here, including “hate” and “intolerance,” must be clearly defined, since they are open to a variety of*

interpretations. Perhaps a list of examples witnessed by the Board and to which the Board means to refer would be a helpful addendum to this draft resolution. We urge the Board to strike the term "discord" from this provision. The word discord simply means "a disagreement between people." We assume it is not the Board's intention to suggest that there should never be a disagreement among Round Rock community members on matters relating to education, or that community members who speak up in disagreement will be automatically condemned. We are challenged to think of two groups of people more passionate about children's education than parents and teachers. Given the desire on the part of both parties to zealously protect the students' best interests, constructive disagreement is to be expected. Most concerning to us is the declaration that individuals and groups whom the Board deems to be promoting any of these negative qualities "will not interfere with the Board of Trustees' efforts..." At worst, this would be a contravention of the Texas Education Code Sec.26.001, which states that "unless otherwise provided by law, a board of trustees, administrator, educator, or other person may not limit parental rights." At best, it would be redundant, since any law that limits the rights of certain parents to involve themselves in the Board's activities would ostensibly already be serving the purpose of this resolution. In any case, when read together, the phrase "any groups and individuals who promote. . . discord . . .are rejected and condemned and will not interfere with the Board of Trustees' efforts..." undoubtedly has a chilling effect. We urge the Board to amend this provision of the Resolution so as to make it clear to the Round Rock community that the Board honors and respects its community members' right to free speech and to petition the government.

RESOLVED this 16th day of December 2021.