

**Via Certified Mail,
Regular Mail & Email**

071-909

April 18, 2024

Mr. James Vasquez, Interim Superintendent
Socorro Independent School District
12440 Rojas Dr.
El Paso, Texas 79928

Mr. Michael Najera, Board President
Socorro Independent School District
12440 Rojas Dr.
El Paso, Texas 79928

RE: Conservator Appointment to Socorro Independent School District

Dear Mr. Vasquez and Mr. Najera:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the appointment of a management team of two conservators to Socorro Independent School District (ISD or district) in accordance with a fully executed settlement agreement between the district and the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency).¹ I am appointing Dr. Michael Hinojosa to serve as lead conservator and Andrew Kim as a conservator to specifically focus on system improvements to Socorro ISD (together the Conservators or the Conservator Team).

Per the terms of the settlement agreement, the Conservators will provide TEA assurances that the district makes every effort to comply with applicable statutes and regulations. As you are aware, TEA received multiple complaints regarding the internal academic auditor's findings in the 2019 graduation audit. The agency received further complaints regarding allegations of conflict of interest, unauthorized use of district funds, misuse of special education funds and personnel, and pervasive governance concerns.

The Conservators will have all authority permitted under Texas law and otherwise agreed to in the settlement agreement including, but not limited to, the following:

- Overseeing and directing any action of the district and/or governance team;
- Conducting onsite inspections of the district during the period of the placement;
- Facilitating a needs assessment of the district and governance systems;
- Supporting the creation of a corrective action plan to address concerns outlined in the needs assessment; and

¹ Pursuant to Texas Education Code (TEC) §39A.002-.003, two or more conservators appointed to a district are also referred to as a management team.

- Reporting to the agency on the progress of the corrective action plan and governance activities of the district.

The appointment of the Conservators does not relieve the district and its governing board of the responsibility to operate in compliance with all applicable statutes and rules. The agency reserves the right to implement all available interventions and sanctions under Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapters 39, 39A, and Title 19, Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 97, individually or in combination, to address current or future deficiencies identified for the district.

The cost of the Conservators' services will be paid by the district in accordance with TEC §39A.903. Each Conservator's fee is \$125 per hour plus necessary travel expenses not to exceed the state per diem rate. Failure to make timely payments to the Conservators may result in appropriate amounts being deducted from the district's Foundation School Program (FSP) funds.

It is my sincere desire that all parties work together cooperatively and productively to address the issues identified for the district. If you have questions about the appointment of the Conservators, please contact Garrett Black, Director of Governance Interventions at (512) 463-9146 or Garrett.Black@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Morath', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

MM/lm