

Declaration of Erika Cabrera

I, Erika Cabrera, hereby declare:

1. I make this declaration based on my own personal knowledge and if called to testify I could and would do so competently as follows:

2. I have just finished my sophomore year at Belmont High School, and I am about to begin my junior year.

3. The lack of textbooks and lack of textbooks in good condition is a serious problem in my school. It makes learning much more difficult than it should be.

4. For example, we did not have any textbooks in my tenth grade U.S. History class. Not only did we not have textbooks to bring home, but we also did not have any textbooks in my classroom. Therefore, the teacher lectured all the time and put notes on the board at the front of the room. This was a real problem, because the teacher lectured very fast, and we did not have books to keep track of the information she was lecturing about. We complained about not having books, but the teacher told us that it was not her fault that we did not have books. After five weeks without books, our teacher borrowed books from another class. However, we did not have enough of the borrowed books to take home, so we could not do homework with them. Then, our teacher needed to return the books to the class from which she got them, and we again had no books. Finally, the teacher borrowed books from another class, but again we did not have enough to take home with us. It was a real problem that we were using this second set of borrowed books, because they were really old—maybe ten years old or older. Also, the tests we took were based on material that was not in the second set of borrowed books. Therefore, we had open-book tests, but the textbooks were useless because the subjects of the tests were not in the books we had. I could have done better on these tests if I had a book to take home and study from and if the books we used in class covered the material on the tests.

5. We read only one novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, in my English class this year. We did not read more because there were no other books for us to take home. The teacher had to bring in some of his own books to class and read to us in class because there were not enough books for us to have in class or to take home. The rest of the time we copied vocabulary words

1 and watched a lot of movies. This does not seem fair. We should have had more books to take
2 home and to read.

3 6. My English class last year did not do much more reading than this year's class.
4 Again, we read only one novel. Last year's novel was *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

5 7. Our Spanish books are in very bad condition. They are very old, and their corners
6 are bent. Frequently the covers are missing, and there is writing all over them. Sometimes the
7 teacher will give a homework assignment that includes pages that were torn out of my book.
8 This happens to other students, too. We tell the teacher when this happened, and the teacher
9 usually gives us a different assignment. Hopefully the new assignment covers pages that are still
10 in my textbook. The missing pages are a problem because the discussions about the assignments
11 are difficult for me to follow. I cannot understand what they were talking about. This makes it
12 much harder to learn in that class.

13 8. It is also difficult to learn when the classes are overcrowded. In my health class
14 this year, I had to sit at the back of the classroom. The teacher would write on the board at the
15 front of the room, but I could not read what he wrote because my seat was too far away. If there
16 were fewer students, I would not have needed to sit so far back, and I could have read the notes at
17 the front of the room. This would have made it much easier to learn.

18 9. I also cannot learn as much as I should because my teachers sometimes come late
19 to class. Usually this is because I have a substitute teacher who says that she could not find the
20 classroom. About once every two weeks, one of my teachers or substitute teachers is up to 15
21 minutes late to class. We are forced to stand outside of the classroom until the teacher comes.
22 This happens for at least one class per day at Belmont. We can learn more if the classes met for
23 the full time they are supposed to meet.

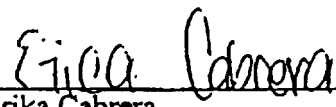
24 10. The entire building is in bad condition, too. For instance, my math classroom,
25 which is a bungalow classroom, does not have speakers, bells, or phones. This means that if
26 something happens or there is an emergency, the teacher must use her cell phone to call the main
27 office. My math classroom is also very hot. I would learn much better if it were cooler, because
28 it would be more comfortable and because we would not be paying attention to how hot it is.

1 11. The bathrooms are also in really bad shape. Students sometimes cannot flush the
2 toilets because the plumbing is broken. It takes too long for the school to send someone to fix it.
3 The school used to lock the bathrooms because they are in such bad condition. They have since
4 opened up all of them, but I still cannot use them. This caused a big problem for me last year.
5 Even if I have to go to the bathroom as soon as I get to school in the morning, I hold it in until
6 the end of the day. This was a reason that I had a kidney infection. My doctor told me that not
7 being able to use the bathroom during the day was a cause of the infection. It was very painful,
8 and it also then caused my back to hurt. I had to go to the hospital to get treated, which was
9 expensive, and I missed almost a whole week of school because of it.

10 12. It is really hard to study when the school and the state do not seem concerned
11 about my education. How do they expect us to get good grades when we do not have the
12 equipment that the rich schools have? I care less if the school and the state care little about me.
13 The conditions in the school make the school look really bad. It makes me want to go to another
14 school. I want to go to a school that does not look so cheap and that looks like the school and the
15 state really care about their students.

16 13. I want to be proud of my school. However, I deserve a better education. I should
17 have all the resources that students in richer schools have. I deserve it.

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19 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
20 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 30th day of June 2001 in Los Angeles,
21 California.

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24 Erika Cabrera
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