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Declaration of Ja Quan Bryant

I, Ja Quan Bryant, 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 am a currently a sophomore at Castlemont High School in Oakland. I have attended Castlemont during the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years.

3. The beginning of the 2001-2002 school year has been completely chaotic and terrible. We are a month into school and students are still not in all of the classes that they need to take. We were given our schedules on the first day of school and many students did not have a full schedule and so announcements were made on the loud speaker during the first week telling students to report to the cafeteria if they did not have classes. I went into the cafeteria and saw that more than one hundred students did not have a full schedule of classes. Students were just wandering around the school because they did not know what they were supposed to do. When I arrived at my classes the teachers did not have any books for us in any of my classes because either the books had not arrived or the administration had not set up a system to allow us to get our books. I did not receive books for any of my classes until about two to three weeks into the school year. There are still many students at Castlemont who do not have their schedules completely worked out and who also do not have books. Several of my friends have tried to see their counselors to get their schedules changed but the line is always huge or the counselor is just not available for the students. I feel terrible for my teachers in this mess because most of them have had to make lots of copies for us to use because we did not and do not all have textbooks. Teachers have told me that there are only two working copy machines at the school and that it is really difficult to make copies – sometimes the machines break or the school runs out of paper.

4. In my world cultures class during the 2001-2002 school year, the teacher has 45 students on her roll book. The classroom is so crowded that she has to borrow desks from other teachers, students are sitting at tables in the back instead of regular desks, and students actually sit at her desk at the front of the classroom. I can see that my teacher is really getting frustrated

1 and I am frustrated because it is hard to learn in such overcrowded conditions. The
2 administration told my teacher that they would reduce the class size but another student just
3 joined our class during the week of September 24-28. My biology class during the 2001-2002
4 school year was also extremely crowded for about the first two weeks of school. My biology
5 teacher had to borrow chairs from other classrooms so that everyone would have a seat. The
6 administration finally split this class into two classes because it was just impossible for my
7 teacher to teach so many students at once. My geometry class during the 2001-2002 school year
8 was also extremely crowded for the first week or two of school. There were about 45 students in
9 that class, but now some of the students have stopped coming or they have gotten moved to other
10 classes.

11 5. Because Castlemont is so overcrowded, the lunch lines at the school are extremely
12 long and several times during the 2001-2002 school year I have not been able to get to the front
13 of the line to get my lunch before the bell rings some 40 minutes later. When this happens I have
14 to go to my next class hungry, and I have much harder time concentrating, I am uncomfortable,
15 and I feel really tired.

16 6. At first I was excited about my biology class this year (2001-2002) because I
17 knew that the teacher in that class was good, but the class turned out to be extremely
18 overcrowded and so after about two weeks they split the class in half. My teacher went to teach
19 the other section and I got stuck with a substitute. This substitute currently has no teacher's copy
20 of the textbook that we are supposed to be using and he does not have a key to the classroom and
21 so everyday the whole class has to wait outside for a good 5 to 15 minutes for the janitor to show
22 up with the key. I have no idea if this teacher is going to stay teaching our class for awhile or if
23 we are going to have another substitute. I think that biology is extremely important for college
24 and even one marking period can really make the difference in how well you do in your next
25 science class. It is really impossible to make up for a good teacher and a good class and so far
26 this year I have not really learned anything about biology. I am really upset about what has
27 happened in my biology class and so I am trying to get into another class with a permanent
28 teacher, but whenever I try to go talk to my counselor she is unavailable or busy.

1 7. In my geometry, world cultures, and biology classes during the 2001-2002 school
2 year, there are still students, as of September 27th, who have not been given their books. I work
3 in the library and I saw that several book shipments did not arrive at Castlemont until about one
4 or two weeks into the school year. In addition, students are still being dropped and added to my
5 classes almost a full month into the 8 month school year. It is extremely distracting for both
6 teachers and students not to have textbooks.

7 8. During the 2000-2001 school year in my physical science class the books were
8 torn up, written all over, and really ratty. Many of the pages in the book were missing and the
9 teacher would have to make extra copies for students who did not have a page in their book or
10 ask us to share with another student when a page was missing. Because so many pages in the
11 book were missing, the teacher would often just make up his own lesson plan that did not involve
12 the book. It makes me upset that our books are falling apart. I really feel like the school does not
13 care about our education or whether or not we succeed.

14 9. In my physical science class during the 2000-2001 school year, I and the students
15 in my class could not do experiments that I know students in other schools are allowed to do
16 because our class did not have safety glasses, Bunsen burners, test tubes, and other science tools.
17 For example, the students were supposed to be able to conduct an experiment on the relative
18 boiling points of salt and sugar water, however, our teacher told us that we did not have the
19 materials for the students to actually do that experiment. Instead our teacher did the experiment
20 on a hot plate and we just had to crowd around to see it. That is terrible. I want to have the same
21 learning experience as students in other public schools in the state.

22 10. In my algebra class during the 2000-2001 school year during the winter time, on
23 and off from about mid-October until February, it was really cold in our classroom because the
24 heating system did not work. I would wear my big puffy jacket in the classroom and it was so
25 cold some days that you could see your breath when you spoke. My teacher complained and the
26 administration gave her a small space heater to put on the floor but the space heater could not
27 heat up the entire classroom. I don't understand how we can be expected to concentrate on what
28 the teacher is saying when we are so cold and uncomfortable. In my English class the heating

1 and air conditioning system were also messed up and so on one day it would be really hot and on
2 another day it would be extremely cold. I remember days in December when it was freezing cold
3 and days at the end of the year when the heater would come on full force and we would all be
4 sweating. My multicultural class was held in a portable that did not have properly functioning
5 heating and air conditioning systems. In that class it was also really cold in the winter time and
6 extremely hot at the end of the school year. In addition to not having air conditioning in our
7 classrooms many windows in the school have been bolted shut. When it is hot and there is no air
8 conditioning you need to be able to open the windows so that you can cool down the classroom.

9 11. Different bathrooms at Castlemont are locked during the day, during lunch time,
10 and during passing periods. When I have to go to the bathroom I will walk around from floor to
11 floor to see if a bathroom is open and I just don't think it is right that they make it hard for us to
12 go to the bathroom. When I found a bathroom that was open during the third week of school it
13 was disgusting. There were no soap dispensers on the wall, no soap anywhere in the bathroom,
14 no paper towels, only one sink worked, and there was toilet paper all over the floor. The
15 bathroom also had graffiti all over the walls and the smell made me feel sick to my stomach. I
16 usually try to hold it all day, which I know is not good for my health, but it is so difficult to find a
17 bathroom that is open and the bathrooms are just so gross when you do find one that you don't
18 want to use it.

19 12. Students at Castlemont are not getting the education they deserve. I believe that
20 school should be a comfortable, stable place where students should be able to concentrate on
21 their studies. I want Castlemont to improve.

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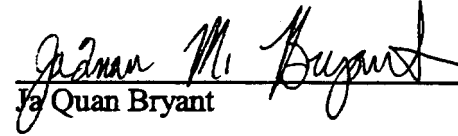
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I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 6th day of October, 2001 in Oakland, California.



Ja Quan Bryant