Delivered via Mail and Email

Pima JTED Governing Board Members:
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Dear Pima JTED Governing Board Members and Administration:

We, the undersigned Governing Boards and Superintendents of member districts that comprise the Pima County Joint Technical Education District, write on behalf of our respective communities to express our opposition to the current draft plans for a potential Pima JTED special bond election. Our perspective should not be misconstrued as opposition to the goal of robust Career and Technical Education for our shared students. On the contrary, we deeply believe in and are committed to this goal. However, this bond would have the detrimental effect of further centralizing CTE opportunities, exacerbating the existing challenge of access for our students who are spread across over 10,000 square miles in Pima, Santa Cruz, and Pinal Counties, and consequently would not provide a worthwhile return on investment for our respective taxpayers.

We are concerned that Pima JTED has lost its way. When voters approved the formation of Pima JTED in 2006, they embraced the vision of a decentralized model that would ensure students across the region could access high quality CTE programs at their local high schools. To this day, 90% of students who participate in CTE courses through Pima JTED do so in satellite programs at their local high school—in real numbers, this translates to 28,800 of JTED's current 32,000 students. When leased land programs (Pima JTED-owned buildings at local high schools) are included in the analysis, the percentage increases to over 92% of JTED students participating in CTE courses at local high schools.

The reasons for this high level of local participation are varied. Certainly, some students face transportation barriers in accessing centralized programs. Others may be on waiting lists. However, most students and families are *choosing* satellite programs, not simply settling for them. Students choose satellite programs *because* they are local, they are accessible, they integrate with the regular school day, they preserve opportunities for after-school sports and jobs and fine arts, and because they are exceptional programs that provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

This begs the question: Why has Pima JTED embarked on a shift away from satellite programs? Over the past several years, Pima JTED has clearly prioritized the development and expansion of its Bridges campus. During this same time, member districts have seen their percentage of funding from JTED decline from 70% to 66%. We also now are subjected to restrictions on how we use our local share of funds and to criteria requiring matching funds for new construction. The funding split and heightened restrictions are especially onerous given the aforementioned ratio of student participation, with 90% of JTED students participating in local satellite programs.

The bond initiative currently being contemplated by Pima JTED administration and Governing Board is neither a necessary nor prudent use of taxpayer dollars. Remember the original vision: robust decentralized CTE programs! Pima JTED leadership has presented bond scenarios that prioritize 80-85% of funds for central campus programs—programs currently accessed by 8% of JTED students. In a $300 million bond package, $240 million would fund central campus projects, with the remaining $60 million to be split between the 14 member districts. Pima JTED's own analysis indicates a current bonding capacity of $155 million, meaning it would be years until the bonding capacity could support the sale of all $300 million in authorized bonds, and consequently, years until the small percentage of funds designated for satellite programs would actually be available. We simply cannot endorse a bond proposal that would result in $240 million for buildings and programs currently accessed by 3,200 students. In per-pupil terms, this would translate to $75,000 of bond funding per central campus student, compared to $2,083 in bond funding per satellite student—a staggering and indefensible discrepancy.

Member districts have a strong history of engaging our local communities, gathering feedback, developing shared visions, and when appropriate, asking for voter support to bring these visions to reality. It is apparent that Pima JTED administration has not followed a similar path—asking voters to fund a campus that is neither accessible nor sought by the vast majority of their students would be misleading and would threaten the trust and support that taxpayers have bestowed upon public education in Southern Arizona.

Approved and Signed this 9th day of December, 2025 by the Amphitheater Governing Board and Superintendent

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