



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

DATE OF MEETING: August 25, 2020

TITLE: Approval of Temporary Permission to Continue Paying District Contribution toward Employee Health Insurance Premiums for Employees on an Unpaid Leave of Absence Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

BACKGROUND: The District contributes \$364.90 per month toward the cost of medical insurance premiums and \$8.76 monthly toward the cost of dental insurance premiums as an employee benefit. Currently, these District contributions terminate at the end of the month during which an employee begins an unpaid leave of absence from work. The employee then has the option to continue health insurance using the continuous coverage options available through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA).

Individuals who elect to use COBRA are responsible to fund insurance premiums fully on their own until they return to work.¹ Once the individual returns to a paid status, employee benefits are restored consistent with the requirements of Governing Board Policies GCCC (Professional Staff Leaves of Absence) and GDCC (Support Staff Leaves of Absence).

This year, some qualified employees have elected to take a Health and Hardship Leave of Absence because they need to continue to quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. A Health and Hardship Leave provides job preservation for the employee during quarantine. Consistent with Policy GCCA (Professional Staff Sick Leave) and Policy GDCA (Support Staff Sick Leave), employees can use available sick leave balance while in quarantine and are then placed on an unpaid leave of absence once paid leave expires. As explained above, the District contributions toward health insurance would normally cease while the employee is on an unpaid leave of absence.

With greater numbers of employees requesting to quarantine during the pandemic, there is a benefit to the District to incentivize its experienced staff members to return to their current positions at the end of their Health and Hardship Leave. Having already invested time and resources to train these individuals, it is important that they be available to serve students once in-person instruction starts. To help facilitate and ensure their return at the end of the leave of absence, there is an advantage to demonstrating commitment to employees by continuing to contribute to health insurance during the pandemic for staff members who must quarantine. The economies of scale associated an investment in experienced employees greatly outweigh the cost of continuing District's contributions to health insurance on a temporary basis. For this reason, Administration recommends that the Governing Board authorize District contributions for health insurance to continue temporarily for employees on an unpaid Health and Hardship Leave of Absence due to COVID-19. Employees will still be responsible to pay the employee's contribution for the insurance during the unpaid leave of absence.

¹ Leaves of absence authorized by the Family Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq. (FMLA) are an exception to this since FMLA mandates a continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

RECOMMENDATION: Administration recommends that the Governing Board authorize District contributions for health insurance to continue temporarily, through the end of the month in which students return to schools for in-person instruction in SY 2020-2021, for employees on an unpaid Health and Hardship Leave of Absence if the employee provides written verification of an intent to return to their position at the end of the quarantine.

INITIATED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michelle Tong".

Michelle H. Tong, J.D.
Associate to the Superintendent and General Counsel

Date: August 19, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Todd A. Jaeger".

Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent