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School District Case Settled

By Sophie Braccini

The insurance company for the Moraga School District reached a negotiated settlement in the lawsuit versus Kristen Cunnane arising out of sexual abuse in the 1990s, according to a statement released May 14. Under the terms of the settlement, the district's insurer will pay Cunnane \$2.85 million. These funds will not come from the district's general fund and will not impact operations at district's schools.

"I am grateful that the District, its insurers and I have reached a resolution, and that current students and staff will not be adversely affected in any way," stated Cunnane through her attorney. "I look forward to continuing to raise awareness around preventability and encouraging school districts everywhere to do everything they can to keep their schools safe. I also hope that sharing my experience has helped others who may be in the grips of abuse or struggling with its consequences."

"Throughout this case, our board has expressed the hope that we could find an agreement that would work for everyone involved," said Superintendent Bruce Burns. "The news that our insurance company reached a settlement with Ms. Cunnane's lawyers was very welcome."

Following the discovery of the more than 20-year-old abuse and the prison sentence of one abuser, it was revealed that Moraga School District personnel at the time had failed its legal obligation to report the suspected abuse. Since the finding last year, the Moraga School District has overhauled the training of its employees, and funded, in partnership with the Lafayette and Orinda school districts, a full-time educator who will teach safety programs to children and parents in the three districts. "We understand that as educators, we are trusted with the safety of our community's children," said Burns, "We are committed to providing our community's children an excellent education in a safe environment. We are going to continue the work of enhancing student safety and doing all that we can to make sure nothing like this happens again in our district."

As part of the settlement, the lawsuit brought by Cunnane against the district and three former administrators will be dismissed. There are still three other pending lawsuits arising from sexual abuse by a former teacher in the 1990s. "We will continue to work toward agreements in these cases that will help the victims continue healing and allow our district to continue its work to educate and protect our children," said Burns.

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