

LOS ANGELES – Representative Xavier Becerra (CA – 30) submitted a statement to the Los Angeles Unified School District School Board today calling on them to complete the Belmont Learning Complex.

Below is Rep. Becerra's entire statement:

“President Caprice Young and Members of the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education:

“Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the critical decision you are preparing to make concerning the future of the Belmont Learning Complex. The importance of your vote cannot be overstated. Like few others, your vote on whether to proceed with the completion of the much maligned, often delayed, and desperately needed high school will chart the Los Angeles Unified School District

's ability and commitment to secure quality schooling for our children and to earn our confidence as their parents.

“Today, some 5,000 students from surrounding neighborhoods attend school at Belmont High School

. Seventy-nine years old,

Belmont

was built to hold 3,300 students. Not joining the 5,000 unbearably over-crowded students in intolerable learning conditions at

Belmont

are some 2,500 other neighborhood high schoolers. Spared the over-crowding, these students now must endure the miles and fumes of busing to all parts of the City, traveling as far as Verdugo Hills High School 22 miles away in Tujunga.

“These bused kids lose the chance to grow up in their neighborhood, to involve themselves fully in the life of their high school, to see their parents become active participants in their schooling. They are forced by their school district to cede quality time for something, which has nothing to do with learning.

“But the worst indignity these students face is that more than 20 years worth of their peers have suffered the same fate. A generation has waited for the Los Angeles Unified School District and its leadership to fulfill its promise to the Belmont community to build new classrooms. It is under this history and for these reasons that the families of the Belmont area demand, even under the less-than-optimal circumstances, that the school district complete the troubled Belmont Learning Complex.

“Would they prefer a different geology, a different location, a different plan for their future school? Undoubtedly. They are no different from those of us who do not face these choices. But their choices are few – really, one.

“A quality education will not breathe without a decent learning environment. The children of the Belmont community, all of them, bused or not, do not have a decent learning environment – certainly not one that you or I would accept for our children.

“The Belmont Learning Complex as originally planned would have offered an inferior, indeed dangerous, environment for teaching and learning. But the parents of the Belmont community know what you and I and the relevant experts know: the Belmont Learning Complex's environmental hazards can be mitigated. The school can operate safely. Twice now, established and respected experts commissioned by this Board have concluded that the Belmont Learning Complex can be completed.

“That mistakes – serious mistakes – were committed by the District in the planning and building process for Belmont, is undisputed. But I give much credit to Superintendent Roy Romer and each member of the school board for bringing us to where we are today.

“President Young and members of the Board, time is running out. The children who needed this school 20 years ago are now the parents of a new generation of students who are just as desperate for a quality home for their neighborhood school. At the federal level, I along with my colleagues from Los Angeles will fight to restore the one billion dollars in funds for classroom size reduction, and the half a billion dollars in school construction monies, which we worked so hard to secure, and which President Bush eliminates in his budget.

“I urge the Board of Education for the Los Angeles Unified School District to vote in favor of completing the Belmont Learning Complex. We have heard from the safety experts who have told us that this school can be built and hazards mitigated. We have heard from Belmont families who want this school to be built. It’s now time to hear the Board say that this school will be built.

“We should build Belmont and we should build it now.

“I thank you for your time and consideration.”