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Dear Marin County Community,

We are speaking out to let all of our Jewish community members know that Marin's school districts and faith-based organizations are here to support you. We also ask all community members to collectively and openly reject antisemitism. Hate speech and hate-motivated behaviors targeted against our Jewish students and community members are unacceptable and must be met with counter messaging that makes clear that our community will not tolerate such behavior. Such acts of hatred do not align with the missions and values of the school districts in Marin County.

Recent social media accounts have targeted our Jewish students and families with hateful imagery and threats in the form of creating lists of their names. Anti-Semitic graffiti and symbolism has sometimes appeared in our schools and in the larger community. History has taught us that hateful actions like these cannot be minimized, tolerated, or ignored. According to a recent report by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, California State University, San Bernardino, anti-Semitic behavior has been on the rise in the United States over the past several years. The Anti-Defamation League states that per their most recent audit, anti-Semitic incidents are at their highest levels since the organization began keeping track in 1979.

A growing number of anti-Semitic acts, posts and messages are regularly being placed online and via social media in cowardly anonymity making it difficult to identify the perpetrators. Therefore, it is more important than ever that we speak out and act when we see such intolerance, and, that we are vigilant in educating ourselves and our youth about the dangers and dehumanization of hate-based ideologies.

Thankfully, students countywide have taken action at their school sites to voice their concerns and reject acts of bigotry and hate. On this issue, and so many others, we must listen to them and follow their lead as their voices counter those who hide behind hateful, anonymous posts and messages. We must also model behaviors that clearly show our children that we will act against injustice and model behavior that values differences, that seeks to understand the feelings of others, that accepts the notion that we all have something to contribute and that we all add value to our society.

This message is strongly joined and supported by the superintendents of Marin County's public high school districts: Kris Cosca, Novato Unified School District; Jim Hogeboom, San Rafael City Schools; Bob Raines, Shoreline Unified School District; Tara Taupier; and, Mary Jane Burke, Marin County Superintendent of Schools. We must continue to wage this fight and follow the counsel of religious leaders like Rabbi Susan Leider and others who can help guide our response to antisemitism.

With the leaders of the other school districts, we stand together as one in a countywide commitment to address issues of intolerance and hate head-on and with a clear and consistent message that such actions have no place in our community. We also commit to continuing our work within our individual school districts to create communities of peace, inclusion and acceptance and to put the light on injustice and intolerance whenever it occurs.

Though these acts of a few are discouraging and dangerous, we know that this is a community that can rise up and confront prejudice and intolerance. Together, we can counter the voices of hate and insure that this is a safe and nurturing community for all.

Tara Taupier, Superintendent, Tamalpais Union High School District
Rabbi Stacy Friedman, Congregation Rodef Sholom