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To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of the San Diego State University Upward Bound/HCOP program regarding the continuation of peer/mentor tutors as well as instructional assistants for Upward Bound/HCOP students during the 2020-2021 school year. I have worked with Upward Bound/HCOP for the past six years as a Health and Public Speaking teacher during the summer residential program and have always appreciated the immense support that comes with having instructional aides and tutors in the classroom and in study sessions. However, in all my years I have never seen a greater need and benefit for this continued support to be provided for the 2020-2021 school year.

In order to continue providing the rigorous coursework and encourage the critical thinking skills needed in my class through online learning, it was imperative that Upward Bound/HCOP provide a solution that supports the online access and needs of our students. This summer during my Public Speaking class, I was given the opportunity to have one Instructional Assistant and four Tutor/Mentors every day. Because each mentor could be assigned to work with five to six students, we were able to provide catered support for each of our students. For example, tutor/mentors who were bilingual were also paired up with our ESL students in order to aid in the translation of directions and writing resulting in the completion of all assignments. As a result of the unique challenges and circumstances created by online distance learning during 2020, my students in Upward Bound/HCOP are far better supported and successful as a result of this added support; I truly believe our students will thrive if this is also provided to all my SDUSD students at Morse High School.

This support allows for students to have more opportunities to engage in critical thinking discussions, receive one-on-one feedback for their presentations, as well as build a sense of accountability and motivation within smaller groups. In addition, this allowed me as an educator to provide and distribute the proper accommodations needed for all of my students in order to succeed in the course. This is what we value above all else as educators, the success of all our students, but especially our disadvantaged students.

The San Diego Unified School District must continue this support for all students who participate in this program throughout the 2020-2021 school year. If you require or desire any additional information please contact me at jdiwa@sandi.net or (619)788-4117. Thank you for your time and consideration in regards to this matter.

Sincerely,

Joy Erika Diwa
Public Speaking Teacher
SDSU Upward Bound Program