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EDITORIALS

Leadership in Name Only: A Failure of Public Trust in PUSD

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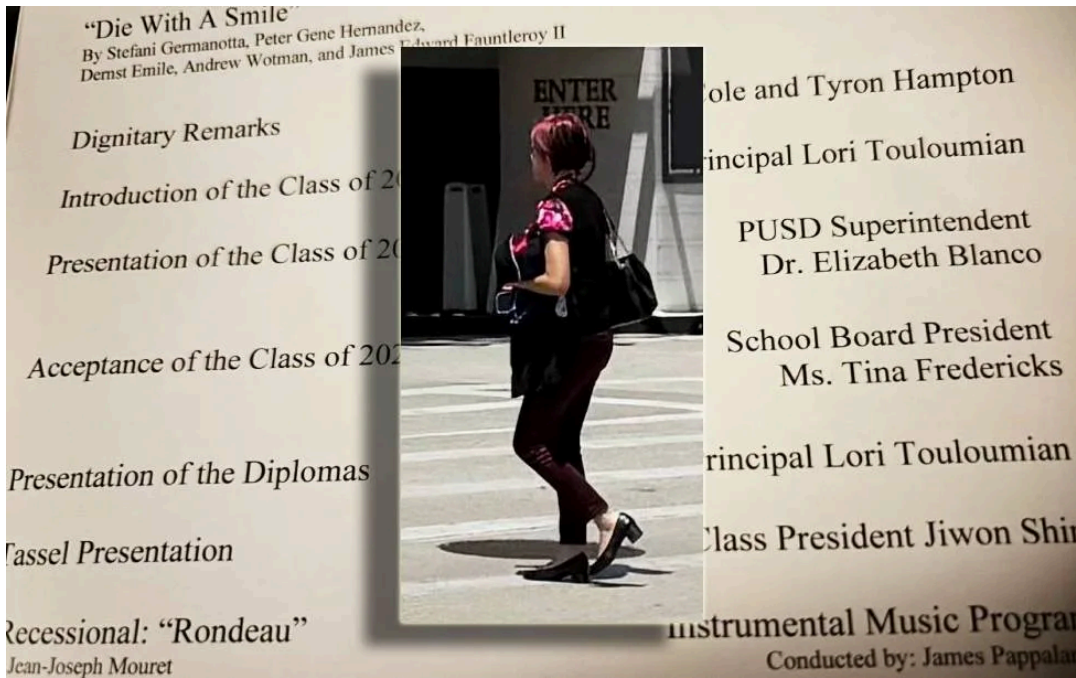
GUEST OPINION

SEPT. 2026 PRINT



PRINT EDITION

Covering: Pasadena • Altadena • Sierra Madre • South Pasadena • San Marino • San Gabriel • Alhambra • Monterey Park • Arcadia • Monrovia • La Crescenta-Montrose • Highland Park.



Tina Fredericks was seen walking outside the Pasadena Civic Auditorium before leaving without addressing the Thurgood Marshall Secondary School commencement ceremony on June 4, 2026 (Photos – Special to Colorado Boulevard Newspaper)

Leadership is not about holding a title. It is a responsibility earned through trust, transparency, accountability, and consistent engagement with the people you represent. Above all, it is defined by whether a leader shows up when it matters most.

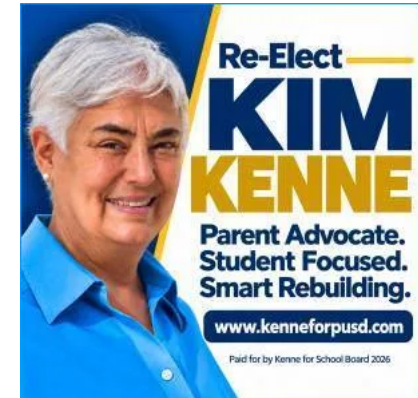
By Dawn Denison

Graduation ceremonies are a time to celebrate the accomplishments of PUSD students.

This year, they became something else: a test of leadership.

PUSD President Tina Fredericks attended two high school graduations, just not the two schools included in her "Consolidation 2027" plan.

At the Thurgood Marshall Secondary School commencement, Fredericks was scheduled to speak and present diplomas. Instead, she walked around outside the Pasadena Civic Auditorium and then left. Trustee Patrice Marshall McKenzie ultimately stepped in to present diplomas. Fredericks also did not attend Blair High School's graduation.



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Meet Kim

For the schools targeted under her consolidation plan, the absence of Fredericks is difficult to ignore. It is hard to reconcile decisions that directly affect these communities with a refusal to stand in front of them on one of their most important days.

This is part of a broader pattern.

When Fredericks is the lone vote to continue a consolidation process despite ongoing concerns about potential Brown Act compliance issues, as well as questions raised regarding communication with the “independent” consultant and the integrity of the process, that is not leadership.

When Fredericks repeatedly declines to meet with constituents she was elected to represent, that is not leadership. Residents of the Upper Hastings Ranch Association scheduled a meeting with her to discuss school closures impacting their neighborhood; Fredericks canceled at the last minute due to “safety concerns.” Communities deserve engagement, not avoidance.

Questions of consistency are unavoidable. Fredericks has chosen to enroll her own children in a 6–12 charter school outside the district while questioning the need for a 6–12 model for PUSD students. While private family educational choices are personal, public advocacy for or against specific school structures inevitably raises questions about how those positions align with lived experience.

During the May 28 Board meeting, she rallied supporters from Claremont to speak on her behalf while local constituents continued to raise concerns. Her constituents live in Sierra Madre and East Pasadena—about seven miles from district offices, not 27. The expectation is representation, not distance.

Taken together, these actions point to a serious concern: a failure of leadership from Tina Fredericks.

While supporters of the consolidation process may see these actions as part of a broader effort to address structural challenges, many in the community remain concerned about transparency and engagement throughout the process.

As a community, we must demand better.

Leadership means ensuring the investment of bond funds in all students and all schools, as voters intended, not only schools favored by the current PUSD Board majority. Taxpayers voted for district-wide improvements, and those commitments are not optional.

Leadership means recognizing mistakes and self-correcting. Trustees should reconsider Resolution 2852 on “optimal” school size, which has been criticized for potential Brown Act concerns and rests on assumptions that have not been clearly defined or publicly substantiated.

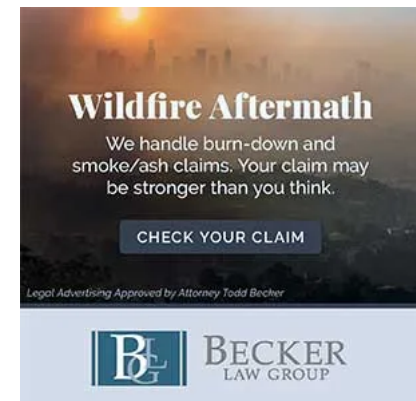


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Public office is a public trust. That trust is not maintained through statements of principle, but through consistent presence, transparency, and accountability in practice.

Without that, leadership loses its legitimacy.

Tagged: blair high school Dawn Denison Guest opinion

Leadership in Name Only: A Failure of Public Trust in PUSD Pasadena Civic Auditorium Pasadena Unified

Patrice Marshall McKenzie Thurgood Marshall Secondary School Tina Fredericks

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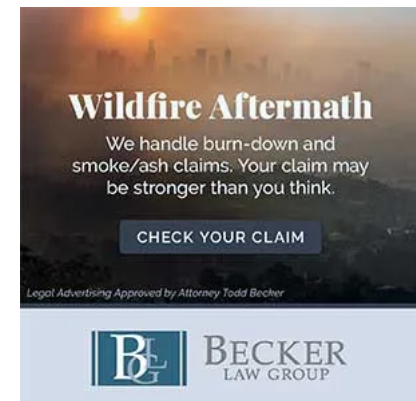


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