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Iowa LULAC opposes DM schools' cuts to early retirement program for teachers

For immediate release

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DES MOINES – The League of United Latin American Citizens of Iowa today announced its opposition to a decision by the Des Moines School District to reduce the number of teachers who are approved for the district's early retirement program.

“We believe this decision will have a negative impact on students, specifically at those schools with high numbers of students who are learning English,” said Joe Enríquez Henry, director of LULAC of Iowa. “This puts more stress on teachers because it forces them to continue working beyond early retirement.”

Only 17 teachers were approved this year for the program, which allows them to cash in unused sick leave and personal days. The program also changed to pay out the amount in one lump sum rather than over the course of five years.

“This was an incentive that kept many good teachers in the district,” Enriquez Henry said. “It also was a draw that encouraged promising teachers to come to our district. Breaking this promise only hurts our chances of competing with other school districts for the best teachers and for more minority teachers to reflect the changing face of our school district.”

Enriquez Henry, who has previously served on the superintendent's budget committee for Des Moines Public Schools, recently was a guest panelist for the National Journal's Diversity Forum at Drake University, which discussed how immigration has changed the Des Moines area's population in various areas including education.

Founded in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the nation's largest and oldest civil rights, volunteer-based organization that empowers Hispanic-Americans and builds strong Latino communities. Its headquarters are in Washington, D.C., and there are 1,000 councils across the United States and Puerto Rico. LULAC's programs, services and advocacy efforts address the most important issues for Latinos, and meet the critical needs of today and the future.

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