



Alex Caputo-Pearl, UTLA President

July 23, 2018

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the 33,000 members of United Teachers Los Angeles, I am writing to share with you our position as adopted by our House of Representatives. UTLA follows the example of the American Federation of Teachers in opposing FBI programs such as *Preventing Violent Extremism* and *Countering Violent Extremism*, and others that require educators and students to be agents of profiling and surveillance in our schools.

In January 2016, the FBI released guidelines for School administration, teachers, counselors, and fellow students to document and report “suspicious behavior” by students. These guidelines are part of a program called “Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools,” which is part of a much larger system of surveillance and data collection that criminalizes youth, silences critical thinking, dissuades their creative expression and political activity, and invades privacy.

Similar programs in United Kingdom such as *Prevent Duty* have targeted students and immigrant families from certain backgrounds, had a devastating impact on youth and their families, and turned educators into mandatory reporters of any activity deemed suspicious by the government. Failure to do so results in severe repercussions. Groups such as *Educators Not Informants* in the UK have spoken out against such programs, demanding an immediate end to practices that “jeopardize the relationship of trust between teachers and students.”

In August 2016, the American Federation of Teachers wrote a letter to the FBI Chief James Comey, co-signed by 18 other civil rights organizations, expressing outrage over the *Don't Be a Puppet* campaign which is part of *Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools*. As the AFT stated, “Increased ideological and surveillance efforts like *Don't Be a Puppet* campaign will have a chilling effect on our schools,” and rather than educating students on violent extremism, this campaign “does the opposite; it promotes bigotry and hatred, and doubles-down on the problematic law enforcement strategy of profiling.”

Just as LAUSD has taken a clear stance to make our schools safe for immigrant students, the District and our City should take a lead in rejecting any program or that fosters a culture of fear and insecurity, and counters our efforts to create inclusive learning environments.

Sincerely,

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President, United Teachers Los Angeles

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