Ellie Martin

From: Sally GONZALES [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, August 9, 2026 6:14 PM
To: COB_mail
Cc: District2
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT FOR 8/11 MEETING

Dear BOS and team,

I would like for my statement to be included in public comments under this Tuesday hearing in regards to the contract renewal of SAEC.

Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I spent many years in Tucson classrooms before I ever set foot in the state Capitol. I know what accountability looks like. Every year, I was accountable for what my students learned and for whether I did the job I was paid to do. So when I look at what this Board is being asked to approve on August 11, I have a simple question: where is the accountability?

The Southern Arizona Education Council, formerly the Metropolitan Education Commission, is asking Pima County to renew its contract for $122,000. According to the county's own memorandum, CEO Rocque Perez is paid $91,770 a year—an amount tied to 95 percent of a Pima County Supervisor's salary. That is not a figure tied to student outcomes. It is not tied to an education credential. It is tied to the salary of an elected official. I read the full report that was published and have many questions that I know elected officials need to be asking.

I went back through this organization's public tax filings to understand what this position has historically paid. Mr. Perez's two predecessors were women. June Webb-Vignery served for years, earning between $37,500 and $70,937 annually. Her successor, Arlene Benavidez, earned between $36,539 and $50,000. These two women held this position for most of a decade combined. They did the work for a fraction of the current compensation. And according to the organization's filings, there were years when the organization brought in substantially more revenue than it does today. Now, the man occupying the same position is being paid roughly twice what either woman ever earned, while the organization's documented activities have raised serious questions about what taxpayers are receiving in return. That deserves an answer. I am also wondering why the County is giving this amount when the City is giving a fraction.

The Teen Town Hall, a program that reportedly ran successfully for 30 consecutive years, did not happen this year. SAEC's own quarterly report described an active FAFSA partnership involving AmeriCorps and

Arizona Serve. The county's current memorandum says that partnership ended, without explaining why. And Mr. Perez's compensation was made retroactive to December 2025—weeks before his contract was actually signed—and that period overlaps with his campaign for state Senate. I am not asking this Board to take my word for any of this. I am asking you to examine the county's own documents and the organization's own public filings and explain the discrepancies to the taxpayers who fund this contract. There is another issue that deserves scrutiny.

Mr. Perez was appointed—not elected—to a Tucson City Council seat. When that appointment ended, he returned to leadership of this organization under an arrangement that had guaranteed his return before he left. Now the organization is also seeking changes to its founding resolution that would alter how this position is classified and viewed by the public. At the same time, many of the elected officials who will now be deciding if they use tax dollars to fund his salary some who are even board members of this organization and even some who are not on the board have publicly supported Mr. Perez's political campaign. These are not unrelated facts. The City is among the governments involved in funding this organization, and its elected leadership has had direct political and institutional relationships with Mr. Perez. That may all be legal. But legal is not the same thing as accountable, and it is certainly not the same thing as transparent.

The public deserves to know whether this contract is being renewed because SAEC is delivering measurable results—or because longstanding political and institutional relationships make renewal easier. I taught for a living. If I had failed to deliver my curriculum for a year, left my classroom to run for office, lost that election, and then returned to my position with compensation dramatically higher than what the women before me had earned, I would have been expected to answer for it.
I believe the same standard should apply here. This is taxpayer money. It should be tied to measurable work, measurable outcomes, and transparent accountability—not political relationships, titles, or personal connections.

So I am asking the Pima County Board of Supervisors to reject the renewal as written on August 11. Do more research and before you give him $122,000, show taxpayers exactly what they are buying.
Show us the outcomes.
Show us the work.
Show us the accountability.
Fund results—not personal relationships, or political connections.

Thank you,

Sen. Sally Ann Gonzales