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Contact:	Megan Braverman Berbay Marketing & PR (310) 405-7343 Megan@berbay.com
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**GREENBERG GROSS LLP WINS \$2.7 MILLION JURY VERDICT IN
WHISTLEBLOWER SUIT AGAINST MONTEBELLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

LOS ANGELES, CA (July 24, 2018) – [Greenberg Gross LLP](#) obtained a seven-figure jury verdict on behalf of Susanna Contreras Smith, the former Superintendent of Schools for the Montebello Unified School District (“MUSD”), against both MUSD and two members of its school board (“Board”).

The seven-day jury trial, tried in Los Angeles Superior Court, involved the wrongful termination of Ms. Contreras Smith, as well as a separate school district official, for exposing the misconduct of Ruben Rojas, the chief business officer for the school district. During trial, Ms. Contreras Smith testified that, before her termination, she had discovered and reported to the Board that Mr. Rojas had obtained his position by making false statements and omissions in his employment application and by providing falsified letters of recommendation. Mr. Rojas had also participated in a “pay-to-play” scheme, illegally steering lucrative MUSD contracts to preferred vendors in violation of public contracting law. Shortly after raising issues with Mr. Rojas’s employment application with the Board, Ms. Contreras Smith was placed on administrative leave and thereafter terminated. After press reports came out regarding the misconduct of Mr. Rojas, the Board voted to terminate Mr. Rojas, but never reinstated Ms. Contreras Smith. During closing argument, Greenberg Gross trial attorney [David Stein](#) argued to the jury that despite the validity of Ms. Contreras Smith’s disclosures to the MUSD, the Board chose not to thank her, but rather provided her with a “pink slip.”

After seven days of trial, the jury deliberated for approximately one day before rendering a verdict in Ms. Contreras Smith’s favor for more than \$2.7 million in compensatory damages against the MUSD and Board members Benjamin Cardenas and Dr. Lani Cupchoy, as well as punitive damages against the Board members.

“We are pleased the jury correctly concluded that the school district wrongfully terminated its outstanding superintendent because she blew the whistle on fraud and corruption,” said Greenberg Gross trial attorney [Aluyah Imoisili](#).

The case is *Contreras Smith, et al. v. Montebello Unified School District, et al.*, Los Angeles Superior Court Case No. BC666775. [Read complaint](#).

Greenberg Gross LLP is an elite business litigation firm that specializes in high-stakes business cases and white collar defense matters across the country. The firm represents public and private companies, prominent law firms, non-profit organizations

and high-level executives in their most significant cases. U.S. News – Best Lawyers® named the firm among its “Best Law Firms” for commercial litigation and white collar defense for five consecutive years. Greenberg Gross LLP has offices in Los Angeles and Orange County.

Los Angeles

601 S. Figueroa Street, 30th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Main (213) 334-7000

Orange County

650 Town Center Drive, Suite 1700
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
Main (949) 383-2800

www.ggtriallaw.com