June 25, 2021

My name is Viken Pakradouni and I’m here to talk to you today about my community in Montebello, which is located in the 38th Congressional District and currently represented by Congresswoman Linda Sanchez.

The 38th Congressional District includes the cities of Artesia, Cerritos, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, La Palma, Montebello, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, and Whittier and portions of Bellflower and of Lakewood.

After World War II, several thousand Armenians displaced by the war settled in and around Montebello, Whittier and Pico Rivera where we have community centers, churches and a school. With a large Armenian American population, our community has a unique and important cultural perspective, with imperative needs from our Congressional representative that cannot be met if our voice is diluted by splitting the district as we fear may happen.

Montebello, and the greater San Gabriel Valley, is home to a strong and proud Armenian community. The community was once discriminated against in housing and public accommodations. While those days of formal discrimination are fortunately over, the community still has needs as a community including safety for Armenians against a recent resurgence in hate crimes and ensuring equitable access to public services. Our efforts to achieve recognition of and restitution for the Armenian genocide also unite Armenian Americans. As a minority group in the United States, breaking up our community’s collective voice may jeopardize much of what we have fought for generations to secure; a seat at the table in American civil society, and representatives who actually understand and care about our needs.

For these reasons, I am requesting that the bulk of our district remain the same with some exceptions. I request that our district incorporate the City of El Monte as well because our communities share a common identity and legislative agenda. Also, the 38th congressional district should exclude the portions of the cities of Lakewood and Bellflower that it currently incorporates. Those areas deserve to be a part of a district which represents the entirety of their interests by incorporating the entirety of those cities, and I believe those interests are different from the bulk of communities within this district. The Armenian-American community of this district is large enough that it merits remaining in one congressional district from our neighboring communities, and so we expect and hope that the community is not broken up and remains fairly represented.

Respectfully Submitted,

Viken K. Pakradouni