My name is Laura Espinosa, President of Santa Paula Latino Town Hall. I live in Santa Paula, CA located in the Santa Clara River Valley in Ventura County. Neighboring towns include Fillmore, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, unincorporated area neighbors are Piru, El Rio and Nyeland Acres. I am also a former Santa Paula City Councilmember and currently am an appointed Commissioner on the Ventura County Medi-Cal Managed Care Commission, dba Gold Coast Health Plan that manages all of the Medi-Cal eligible health care services for low income residents of Ventura County. There are currently over 200,000 Medi-Cal recipients primarily living in Oxnard, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme, Fillmore, Piru, El Rio and Nyeland Acres.

Our residents are low income with low educational attainment rates, employment is mostly agricultural and essential work with little opportunity for high paying jobs in these communities. There are over 40,000 mostly Latino and Indigenous farmworkers spread throughout the identified areas. The Native American community holds sweat lodges (religious practices) in Santa Paula. The Catholic religion is also the primary religious affiliation among the largely Latino community with several Catholic churches in the region.

Santa Paula was subject to a U.S. Department of Justice Section 2 Voting Rights lawsuit that was settled in 2002. The City of Santa Paula admitted that voting was racially polarized whereby the Latino community was and has been unable to elect candidates of choice due to voter dilution.

We want to keep the communities identified above, and included in the attached map, in order to obtain the power to elect our candidates of choice for which the U.S. Constitution guarantees.

I have voted in every election since I was 18 years old and am now 66 yrs old and have never seen a state or federal elected official that looks like me or is from my community.

Other COI criteria that bind our group include respect for the environment. The Santa Clara River Valley of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, is bordered by the Santa Clara River, the last remaining wild river in California and Los Padres National Forest and Los Angeles County to the East, along Highway 126 and beach communities to the North. We have a track record of fighting the placement of two power plants in Oxnard and Santa Paula. Latino Organizations such as Santa Paula Latino Town Hall and the League of United Latin American Citizens and CAUSE have worked together to protect our environment, from Big Oil interests and in support of immigrant rights. Our Native American community considers our land sacred.

Our communities suffer the highest rates of asthma, exacerbated by air quality impacted by local oil wells. Childhood obesity rates suffer due to pockets of food deserts and lack of
income to purchase healthy food. Multiple families often house together in order to afford rents that are normally over 30% or higher of their income. During the pandemic, local volunteer efforts distributed food from the local food bank at pop-up events. This is how they survived. Our Covid 19 rates were disproportionally higher than wealthy, mostly white communities of Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Newbury Park and parts of Simi Valley and beach communities of Ventura and Santa Barbara.

In 2018, the County of Ventura proposed to close the obstetric unit of the only local hospital in our area. Mostly Latino residents organized together and brought the largest Federally Qualified Health Center, Clinicas del Camino Real, that serves primarily farm workers and low income Latinos/as along with the County of Ventura Health Care Agency, to the table in order to save health care access to low income Latina pregnant mothers in the Santa Clara Valley. **No State or Federally elected official** came to our aid. It was our community who organized together to save our only access to local hospital care. That is just one example of lack of representation with lived experiences.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to express the importance of our plea to remain together as a compact, contiguous, community of interest that is approximately 400,000 in population as designed in our attached map.

Sincerely,
Laura Espinosa
President
Santa Paula Latino Town Hall