Commissioners - thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Benjamin Valdez, I am with Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA and partnering with NALEO Education Fund.

I have lived in Boyle Heights for the last 29 years. My neighborhood is considered an inner-city, known for our history of activism, immigrant backgrounds, gang violence, and over-policing. Despite these labels and considerations, my neighborhood in the last few years has been most impacted by the Covid19 pandemic, effects of higher rent, and lack of affordable housing. Additionally, job security and access to medical insurance have been significant socio-economic hurdles. My community as outlined by the map attached is considered west of Indiana St, north of Washington Blvd, east of Mission Rd, and south of Main St.

As a young teen, I had no idea what my community would become and had no idea how to engage with my community in a positive way, there were few programs that explained the governmental or political process. The most prominent stories told to me personally about my community was the history made during the Blow-Outs in the ’60s and ’70s, a piece of history that was told by teen youth who were urging the school district to have college-bound courses for Latino students with a career-driven course like carpentry and mechanics. Other stories include how Mothers of East LA turned to activism to combat the development of a battery plant near East LA. In recent years, 2006 included a re-activation of the eastside by urging the community to protest in Downtown LA to bring awareness of today's laborers’ rights. I explain this to explain that my community had always risen to the occasion of the needs of the disenfranchised, marginalized, and most vulnerable.

As of 2019, Boyle Heights has a less than 10% College Graduation Rate which is far below the Los Angeles average of 31%, and below their neighbors El Sereno and Lincoln Heights. According to the Neighborhood Data for Social Change data set, Boyle Heights in 2019 had a 12% unemployment rate that has increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. We have a combination of really young people and elders in Boyle Heights that require and benefit from government assistance.

It is my personal and professional opinion that our assembly, congressional, and senate lines be redefined by the most updated census data, by population based on fairness, and defined by equitable representation and not gerrymandering. My hope would be there we do not divide Boyle Heights into multiple representatives so that we make the access to governmental, local services, and state resources centralized by one representative.