My name is Oussama Mokeddem and I currently serve as the Policy and Advocacy Manager for the Sacramento Valley and Central CA office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights organization. I am also here representing the AAPI & AMESMA Redistricting Collaborative. Today, I will be talking about the Arden-Arcade and Carmichael neighborhoods, defined by the Howe Ave. boundary to the west, Auburn Blvd. to Winding Way boundary to the north, Manzanita Ave. boundary to the east, and Hurley Way (between Howe & Watt Aves.), El Camino Ave. (between Watt and Walnut Aves.), and Marconi Ave. (between Walnut and Manzanita Aves.) boundaries to the south.

As an organization that provides free civil rights, immigration, and community education services to the underserved, this region has stood out as one with the highest number of Afghan and Syrian refugees in Sacramento, since heavy resettlements started in 2016. Many service organizations and resettlement agencies have their offices located within this community of interest to be able to reach the refugees in the city. Many refugees in the area are low-income and have limited English proficiency, which is shared across several immigrant and working-class communities residing in the area, meaning that accessibility to resources and services is essential to them. Moreover, a majority of Afghan and Syrian refugee families are of the Muslim faith and this Community of Interest is home to seven mosques, the highest concentration in a single area across all of Sacramento County.

Many of these families rely upon education policies that exist in the San Juan Unified School District, as well as the progress that is being made in relation to cultural sensitivity, to receive quality education for their children. Over the last five years, CAIR, as well as other service organizations, routinely conduct trainings on how to best address the needs of refugee children and families in schools. Additionally, we have contributed to many significant policy implementations aimed at protecting the civil rights of the increasingly Muslim student population within the school district.
We hope that the commission will continue to recognize this community of interest in its entirety and keep it whole, continuing to build upon the progress that has been made since these families have settled in the area. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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