The area of interest is the northwest region in the City of Fresno around Herndon and Milburn Ave.

My name is Sukaina Hussain, I have lived in Fresno for nearly 6 years and I am the Deputy Executive Director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations Central California. I am also speaking as part of the AAPI & AMEMSA Redistricting Collaborative. As a nonprofit organization, CAIR’s work focuses on providing legal services for the Muslim community. This includes protecting civil rights, immigration services, advocating for policies rooted in justice, community organizing on issues impacting the local Muslim community, building youth leaders and mobilizing the Muslim community through civic engagement and ensuring voices are heard on decisions that impact all of our families. I will be focusing on the northwest area of the City of Fresno within Fresno County.

The Community of Interest in northwest Fresno around Masjid Badr (which is a mosque located on Herndon and Milburn Ave) is bound by Bullard Ave to the south, Marks Ave to the east, Highway 99 on the West and continues north of Herndon Ave. This region has a significant concentration of Muslim and Arabic-speaking immigrants and should remain whole.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in Muslim residents moving into this area, in particular the immigrant community which largely consists first-generation families from Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern countries. Not only do these families have a shared language, they also have shared religious values and cultural similarities. The Muslim community has not only become more concentrated in this region due to lower cost of living but also because of proximity to Masjid Badr. The masjid, or mosque, serves not only as a place of worship, but is also a community center where groups such as young people, seniors, students and mothers and many more groups gather for special interest activities. In addition to regular Friday services, the mosque holds daily prayers, and many evening and weekend events which brings the community together on a regular basis. Feeling a connection and closeness to the mosque - physically and spiritually - is very important to Muslim community and has led to the increased concentration of Muslim residents in this region. Issues related to immigration are a shared priority for our community, particularly as it relates to refugee populations. Other shared concerns that bring our community together are education and schools for families with young children, the cost of rent/housing and in-language access to county and city resources.

Today, we ask the Commission to keep our Community of Interest together and whole. There are other immigrant communities with similar traits in the region that would be helpful to keep together as well, such as nearby Hmong and Punjabi Sikh communities. This Community of Interest is separate and distinct from the economically advantaged areas in North Fresno and Fig Garden.

Thank you very much for your time.