

Dear Commission members,

Please see the following written comments that I have prepared in collaboration with the AAPI & AMEMSA State Redistricting Collaborative.

My name is Sara Rohani, and I am a Staff Attorney with Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles. I am writing to provide an introduction for the AAPI & AMEMSA State Redistricting Collaborative and to share information about the communities where our clients reside in Southern California.

Alongside Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus, Advancing Justice – Los Angeles has been leading the AAPI & AMEMSA State Redistricting Collaborative, and has worked to engage organizations and community leaders in the Los Angeles region. The testimony prepared by myself and my colleagues reflects our work and engagement with members of the community – groups, leaders, organizers – to identify Communities of Interest that capture the incredible diversity of our region.

As with the Collaborative's work statewide, our Los Angeles regional group held four series of community workshops, reaching over 100 community members. These workshops not only identified Communities of Interest but also educated attendees on the basics of redistricting and guided community members on how to engage in the process. The feedback we have collected for you today comes from a variety of stakeholders, including the voices of youth centers, community health providers, nonprofits, leaders, and community organizers. Unfortunately, one member of our collaborative, a leader from the Pacific Islander community in the South Bay, was unable to attend Wednesday's hearing but will be submitting written testimony.

In the Los Angeles region, Asian Americans are the second largest minority group. One out of every five Asian Americans in the United States live in Los Angeles County. With the increase in hate and violence directed towards the AAPI community over the past year, we think it's incumbent on the Commission to respect AAPI Communities of Interests.

The populations Advancing Justice – Los Angeles serves are located throughout the Los Angeles region, notably in the San Gabriel Valley, South Bay, and Gateway Cities. In the Los Angeles metro area, our communities are located most significantly in Chinatown and Koreatown.

The San Gabriel Valley area is home to several cities with majority AAPI populations – Monterey Park, Alhambra, San Gabriel, Rosemead, and El Monte. In 2010, the first majority AAPI Section 2 seat was created in the San Gabriel Valley – AD 49. This district should be protected and kept whole.

In the East San Gabriel Valley, cities such as Rowland Heights, Walnut, Hacienda Heights, and Diamond Bar are either over half or nearly half comprised of AAPI individuals.

The South Bay cities of Torrance, Gardena, Carson have large AAPI populations as well. These cities have many local AAPI owned and operated small businesses and there has historically been a strong presence of Asian Americans in elected offices and public positions.

In these times, it is important to keep these AAPI communities together – we are a cohesive community with strong ties to each other. We urge the Commission to respect the AAPI communities and keep these unified communities whole.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sara Rohani