



CALIFORNIA BLACK CENSUS AND REDISTRICTING HUB

September 15, 2021

California Citizens Redistricting Commission
721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via electronic transmission

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the 12 Los-Angeles-based organizations that are part of the California Black Census and Redistricting Hub, ***I write to you today to summarize and uplift the communities of interest identified by our coalition members*** in 14 community feedback sessions with 92 Los Angeles residents. Our coalition partners spent months engaging members of the community on the geographic boundaries and issues that are important to this region. We have submitted shapefiles and narratives based on the information we received during those sessions but we also wanted to uplift the major themes we heard during those sessions in writings. Black Hub team members gave verbal summaries of other key regions including San Diego, the Inland Empire, Central Valley, and the Bay Area.

Historic LA Black Communities

Los Angeles County is home to the largest Black Community in California. This includes South Los Angeles which consists of many historic neighborhoods including the ***Baldwin Hills, the Crenshaw Corridor, West Athens, Watts, Florence-Graham and West Adams*** neighborhoods. This also includes other nearby cities and communities, such as ***Compton, Inglewood, Hawthorne, Long Beach, and Skid Row***.

The clear and consistent message we heard from community members is that keeping these historical Black neighborhoods together rather than splitting them up or districting them with other coastal communities that don't align with the needs of Black Angelenos is key. LA Black communities members have specifically heard from elected officials over the years that while they would love to pass certain policies that would benefit the historic Black communities of Los Angeles, their more affluent constituents in coastal communities would not support those policies and therefore the elected official would not vote for those policy solutions, leading to non-existent or watered down policies that don't actually address the systemic issues facing Black communities. Concerns of food inaccessibility, housing insecurity, gentrification, over policing, and incarceration were consistently raised as major issues in all of our community input sessions in these areas that need to be addressed and disproportionately impact Black communities in Los Angeles.

In addition, we heard that as parts of South LA become increasingly diverse, Latino and Black communities have faced similar struggles. Some South LA and Southeast Cities communities have started to come together

to address some of these issues and challenges. We heard that it's important that certain districts between South LA and the Southeast Cities reflect and honor Black-Brown diversity & solidarity while ensuring black folks have a strong voice to equally participate in the political process.

Emerging LA Black Communities

In addition to the historical black communities of the South LA/South Bay region, community members also identified a few other emerging and growing Black communities throughout the county, including *Lancaster, Palmdale, Santa Clarita, North Hollywood and Altadena*. The hope is that those communities could remain as whole as possible to ensure the shared interests of Black communities in these areas are heard.

LA Black Cultural and Political Pride

Finally, we heard consistent refrains about pride in the resilience of the Black community in navigating systemic challenges, while still sustaining small businesses, raising families and protecting home ownership. We heard pride in the cultural and political impact that LA Black communities have had over the years. As you may know, Black Los Angeles has influenced political discourse around the world by spearheading multiple social justice uprisings and political movements spanning decades, starting with the Civil Rights Movement up to today. In addition, Los Angeles has birthed a wealth of artists that have helped tell the story of Black communities in LA while also making a global impact. Places like Compton, Watts, Inglewood, Leimert Park, Long Beach, and others have a rich history that have contributed to telling the stories of the Black experience throughout the world.

Conclusion

As this process comes to a close, we hope you consider and uplift the testimony of residents in these communities. Without appropriate lines that protect Black political power, historic Black Los Angeles communities will be decimated by gentrification and displacement and cost of living will continue to rise in emerging Black communities such that Black people will be pushed out of Los Angeles County. However, we can help the rich culture and legacy of Black Los Angeles thrive by taking heed to the invaluable input provided by our community members in Los Angeles and ensuring that Black voices are uplifted during the line-drawing process.

Thank you for your time and dedication to creating a transparent and equitable process.

Sincerely,

James Woodson
Redistricting Lead & Policy Director
California Black Census and Redistricting Hub