

**Community of Interest Testimony  
to the California Citizens Redistricting Commission**

**Date: October 5, 2021**

**Zone: J (Orange County)**

**Area: Santa Ana**

**Name: Kayla Asato**

**Organizational Affiliation: Orange County Environmental Justice (People's Redistricting Alliance)**

**Community of Interest: Low-income communities of color facing environmental justice concerns**

**Direction: Draw Santa Ana (East of Harbor Blvd) with West Anaheim and South Fullerton**

**Introduction:**

My name is Kayla Asato and I am the redistricting organizer for Orange County Environmental Justice. As our name suggests, OCEJ fights for environmental justice in water quality, cleaning the lead from our soils, better air quality, and electoral change to make all of this happen. We mostly do work in the cities of Santa Ana, Anaheim, Fullerton and Orange. In addition, we are a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance, a coalition of 16 community-based organizations established to promote a greater community voice in statewide and local redistricting processes here in OC.

**My community is:**

Because of the work that we do, especially with disadvantaged communities dismissed by our political establishment, our communities of interest typically include low-income communities of color facing environmental justice concerns, many undocumented. Our communities in Fullerton (South of Chapman), Anaheim (West of the 55 fwy), and Santa Ana (East of Harbor Blvd) are similarly impacted by soil lead levels, sometimes exceeding 50x the recommended limit, ignored when voicing their concerns about water quality due to poor pipes and other infrastructure concerns, or even horrendous air quality from traffic and oil plumes. These devastating environmental justice issues are often overlooked by policy makers, while low-income and mostly Latinx communities already facing problems like housing injustice and police brutality, pay the price.

**My community is located:**

The communities that we serve in Santa Ana are primarily based in the Madison Park Neighborhood, the Santa Ana neighborhoods between Cedar and Evergreen, but other soil lead hotspot data indicates that other alarming levels of harm blanket the entire city.

**My community is similar to the following neighborhoods:**

Eastern Santa Ana is very much similar to East Garden Grove in terms of the demographics, housing insecurity, and environmental justice burdens. East Santa Ana is also similar to West Anaheim and South Fullerton in terms of demographics, housing disparity, police violence, and even environmental burdens. Both East Santa Ana and the West Anaheim-South Fullerton area are home to a superfund site. Santa Ana is home to 11 active superfund sites.

**My community is different from the following neighborhoods:**

The environmental justice burdens in the air, water, and in the soil are far different than the burdens are in west Garden Grove, Santa Ana (West of Harbor Blvd), and Westminster.

**What makes my community special is:**

In the city of Santa Ana (East of Harbor Blvd), there are large amounts of soil lead and poor air quality, predominantly in the Latinx communities. In West Garden Grove, West Santa Ana and all of Westminster, the issues and communities are very different in terms of environmental justice concerns. The large majority of Santa Ana is much more similar to West Anaheim in terms of demographics and issues. Santa Ana and West Anaheim have two of the deadliest police departments in California, have the majority of frontline workers in OC, and also bear the brunt of the soil lead crisis, in some cases exceeding 50x the recommended health maximum. To be clear, no amount of soil lead is good, but 50x higher than the state recommended limit of toxins poisoning our kids is far too unacceptable. These devastating environmental justice issues are often overlooked by policy makers, while low-income and mostly Latinx communities already facing problems like housing injustice and police brutality, pay the price.

However, unlike other communities where soil lead is an issue (though, no community has it as bad as Santa Ana in the entire county), this community takes action and fights for justice. And that makes this community special and deserving of its own voice, when possible.

**In conclusion:**

We must keep these environmental burdens in mind when drawing the district lines, ESPECIALLY because they fall along racial and socioeconomic lines. Please keep our EJ and latinx communities together when drawing the maps. We urge you to keep Anaheim (West of the 55 fwy) and Fullerton (South of Chapman Ave) together with Santa Ana (East of Harbor Blvd). EJ communities hardly ever have any representation, and in such concentrated hotspots like we have here, it is hard to understate how impacted and hurt these communities are.

And as such, it is essential that these communities of interest are kept together when possible to grow the electoral strength and voice they desperately need. We need power to offset the harm that has been done to our communities and advocate for the changes that we need to achieve even a semblance of equity if not liberation. Let our voices be heard, and allow us to be part of the democratic process.