

From: **Nao Kabashima**
Date: Tue, Oct 12, 2021 at 10:08 PM
Subject: COI testimony follow up - San Diego, City Heights
To: <voterfirstact@crc.ca.gov>

Hello,

My name is Nao Kabashima. I am the Executive Director of the Karen Organization of San Diego (KOSD). We are a part of the AAPI & AMESMA Redistricting Collaborative. When I gave my oral testimony on September 2nd, I said that I would be following up with a map of the neighborhood boundaries. I am sharing my testimony along with the attached map.

KOSD's office is located in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, on the corner of University Avenue and 54th street. Since 2007, more than 2,200 refugees from Burma have been resettled in San Diego, and this is one of the newest refugee communities in the region. More than 90% of them live in City Heights, within walking distance of our office. Each year, KOSD serves more than 800 individuals from Burma through the direct services including case management services, employment services, emergency response, and non-clinical crisis counseling. At the same time, KOSD is a community and cultural space where refugees from Burma can explore and build their new home together through a strong community support system, while remembering and maintaining their cultural heritage. We work with every Burmese ethnic community resettled in San Diego, including Karen, Karenni, Kachin, Shan, Chin, Burmese, and Rohingya. Most of them have spent decades in the isolation of refugee camps. Camps lack opportunities for education, employment, and skill development. As such, refugee families often arrive in San Diego with little more than the clothes on their backs, with no formal education, and with traumatic memories of human rights violations back in their own home country. 90% of the adult population has no or very limited English proficiency, and most of them didn't have opportunities to complete elementary education due to the long civil wars, which are still not over yet, since 1948. They are among the most vulnerable and underserved communities in San Diego as most service providers lack the language capacity and cultural competence to work with this population. 100% of current KOSD clients are Low and moderate income residents based on the HUD income limits for the City of San Diego with 21% living with very low income and 77% living with extremely low income.

I have been working with this community in City Heights since 2009 and have witnessed many many occasions that our community members from Burma didn't have opportunities to share their voices just because their population is small. And over the past years, Karen Organization of San Diego has worked with many different refugees and newcomer communities in City Heights who share similar backgrounds and needs and newly arrived refugees in the area. It is critical for us to keep the entire City Heights community within one district so that we can amplify all refugee and newcomer voices and their needs are met. Our refugee families from Burma live in the City Heights and its surrounding area which is bounded by Highway 805 to the west and the 70 Street to the east; Highway 94 to the south and Adams Avenue to the north. However, the City Heights area is currently broken into three districts (78, 79, and 80). At the same time, it is critical for City Heights to be in the same district with Southeastern San Diego so that we can unite and work together with fair representation.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,
Nao Kabashima
Executive Director, Karen Organization of San Diego
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cc: Dr. Kathryn E. Jeff