



July 27, 2021

Submitted via Electronic Mail

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CC: Fresno County Redistricting Advisory Commissioners:

Ken Abrahamian (Chair), District 1

Jim Petty, District 4

Hugo Morales (Vice-Chair), District 3

Glenda Hill, District 4

Katherine Burrows, District 1

Richard Gallegos, District 5

Elizabeth Kolstad, District 2

Suzanne Mott, District 5

Lawrence Garcia, District 2

Jeff Cardell, CAO's Recommendation

Patience Milrod, District 3

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability works alongside low-income communities of color in the San Joaquin Valley and the Eastern Coachella Valley. As is most relevant here, we work with community leaders in the communities of Lanare, Cantua Creek, El Porvenir, Tombstone, Calwa, and Fresno City in Fresno County to advocate for local, regional and state government entities to address their community's needs for the basic elements that make up a safe and healthy community, including safe and affordable drinking water, affordable housing, effective and safe transportation, efficient and affordable energy, green spaces, and clean air.

We urge the Commission to improve the participatory aspects of the redistricting process - namely, we have several suggestions for the Commission to better engage the public, especially communities who have historically been excluded from electoral and political decision-making processes.

First, we urge the Commission to improve their remote participation offerings for all public hearings. At the July 14 hearing in Riverdale, while Zoom was offered, participants were told that questions could not be submitted via Zoom. When there was pushback, the County staffer monitoring the Zoom account did present questions from remote participants to the audience, but this was not well-publicized to participants. Additionally, not all the questions submitted in the chat were read and answered. We urge the Commission to ensure that Fresno residents are able to participate by commenting and asking questions via Zoom - especially considering that Zoom is already being used, and participation is possible - and to publicize this feature to residents.

Second, community members from Lanare who attended the July 14 meeting via Zoom were disappointed with the interpretation services. As Spanish speakers, it was unclear to them if they would have been able to participate in-person, as in-person interpretation services were not clearly advertised on the meeting flyer or elsewhere. Language access is an integral part of a fair and equitable redistricting process, as residents who speak a language other than English deserve an equal opportunity to participate and have their voices heard. This is especially salient in the Riverdale and Lanare Census-Designated Places, where 67.1% and 90.7% speak Spanish and 42.8% and 17.6% speak English less than very well, respectively, according to ACS 2019 survey data. It is incumbent on the Commission to ensure that communities are able to participate, and that opportunities to participate are easily accessible to everyone. We urge the Commission to make translated materials and interpretation services both available and well-publicized



for both in-person and remote participation, especially in communities where the majority of residents speak another language in addition to English and a sizable percentage only speak a language other than English.

Relatedly, we urge the Commission to expand its outreach and engagement efforts, particularly in languages other than English. The flyer for the July 14 community meeting was published the preceding Friday, only 5 days before the meeting, and was only available in English and Spanish. All materials related to the redistricting process should be available in the main languages in Fresno County, including but not limited to Hmong and Punjabi. It is imperative that promotional materials are available well in advance of the meeting date and in multiple languages to ensure that participation is accessible to all.

Additionally, we are concerned that planned outreach and engagement efforts are not comprehensive enough to capture communities - namely low-income communities of color, working class communities, rural communities, and communities without access to broadband - in the participation and Community of Interest process. While there are options to participate in-person and submit comments or maps via email or mail, this is not comprehensive enough to capture folks who are too busy to attend or live too far from in-person meetings and do not have access to the Internet to print the physical maps. Folks who experience these barriers are disproportionately members of the aforementioned communities. We recommend the Commission mail multilingual maps to residents in low-income and rural communities, engage with and fund community-based organizations to conduct outreach through door-to-door canvassing in these communities, table at events in these communities, and host pop-up events in these communities where folks can participate in the COI collection process without having to seek out opportunities to do so.

Finally, in addition to our general concerns about accessibility to this process, we want to uplift a specific concern regarding District 4. The July 14 meeting, held on the western side of the district, was much more easily accessible to communities like Lanare, for whom travel to Fresno City for a meeting may be time-cost prohibitive. However, for communities like Tombstone, on the eastern side of the county, the Riverdale location was still a barrier to access and participation in the public meeting that was ostensibly geared towards facilitating participation in their district. As a result, we urge the Commission to hold a second District 4 hearing on the eastern side of the district, to facilitate participation for all.

Thank you for your consideration, and we are excited to continue engaging in the 2021 Fresno County redistricting process.

Best,

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