

WRITTEN TESTIMONY (AUGUST 11 OCBOS COI PUBLIC HEARING)

Hello Supervisor Chaffee, my name is Karen Alvarado and I represent the Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO). OCCCO works to empower individuals and congregations to use their voice to make positive, lasting change within low-income communities of color. Since 2017, we have trained more than 200 faith-based community members through our Leadership Academy. We've had over 30,000 conversations with voters in low-income communities of color during the past five years and involved hundreds of youth in civic engagement. Our current work focuses on Housing with Dignity, Education Justice, and Immigration Rights. We are also a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance, a coalition of 15 community-based organizations established to promote a greater community voice in statewide and local redistricting processes here in Orange County.

Our communities of interest are predominantly marginalized low-income Latinx residents of Orange County, especially working-class immigrant and mixed-status communities. Unfortunately, what brings our communities together is seen far too often in working-class minority communities; a lack of representation, housing inequities, and a lack of code enforcement. Nevertheless, with all of these multi-generational and systemic issues, our communities have been part of monumental achievements, including the implementation of district-based elections in cities like Fullerton and Anaheim. As Orange County grows and demographics change, our communities continue to fight for equitable representation.

Some of the similarities that our communities of interest in West Anaheim and South Fullerton share are that they are predominantly hard-working, immigrant, low income communities of color, facing a lack of affordable housing, contributing to their increasing homeless population. Our communities are impacted by the priority that is placed on tourism in these areas by our local policymakers and thus, leaves our communities with dense neighborhoods and overcrowded housing. This clearly portrays some of the key differences between the communities in West Anaheim and South Fullerton in comparison to those in the Anaheim Hills and Yorba Linda. Anaheim Hills and Yorba are predominantly white, affluent, well-maintained communities who don't experience or rarely experience the same housing and homelessness situations that our communities of interest do.

In conclusion, keeping West Anaheim and South Fullerton together in a supervisorial district is imperative for low-income Latinx communities throughout the northern part of the county, who need to speak collectively with one voice. As our community continues to grow, it is important to preserve the culture they bring while also adapting to changes in their surrounding neighborhoods. Multigenerational residents have continued to fight gentrification; the only way for the needs of these communities to be heard and not ignored by local policy makers would be to not divide them.