

## **ORAL TESTIMONY (AUG 11 OCBOS COI PUBLIC HEARING)**

Good Afternoon, my name is Hina Ahmad and I am the Program Manager of the South Asian Network. Our organization provides culturally and linguistically sensitive direct services to the South Asian community in the areas of healthcare access, civil and immigrant rights, and gender based violence. We are also working on redistricting as a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance.

My community of interest is the South Asian community. It is diverse in culture, language and faith, and is integral to the community at large. Our community gathers in times of celebration and times of advocacy. They are a community that shares resources across the board. The South Asian community is also diverse in its socioeconomic status, education levels, and immigration status. Many South Asians immigrated to this country, seeking asylum, seeking opportunity, and have since built strong ties with local communities. The South Asian community in Southern California is bound together by a shared history and geography.

My community is located near the many faith based institutions that serve the region, including the Buena Park Gurdwara on Orangethorpe and Knott and the Islamic Center of Orange County on State College Blvd. There are South Asian grocery stores and restaurants located near many of these religious institutions as many members of our community live near their local religious institution, many of these institutions are gathering places and community centers for our community members.

Buena Park, Fullerton, and West Anaheim have similar language capacities, faith, socioeconomic status, countries of origin, education, immigration status, and more. The temples and places of worship in Buena Park, Fullerton and West Anaheim have continued to embrace the community around them and provide resources to their neighbors, regardless of ethnic backgrounds or religious affiliations. These communities should be kept together in the same interest. With common interest, the communities in these cities continue to care deeply for one another.

It is important that the voices and needs of the South Asian community are heard and understood by elected officials. South Asians are often perceived as affluent professionals. Yet many South Asians are living in poverty, hiding in the shadows, fearful of alienating immigration policies, unable to access resources due to limited language capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted what many South Asians know - we need in language resources to access support like healthcare access, financial support, public health education, community and mental health support, and so much more.

In conclusion, it is important that the South Asian community be taken into consideration in the new district maps by keeping Buena Park, Fullerton, and West Anaheim together in one supervisorial district. Our community, like many other communities, works together to support one another, share resources, and advocate for needs. It is important that these communities be kept together, to empower their voices, and to continue building these strong ties. Thank you.