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Assembly California Legislature



ASH KALRA
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TWENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

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October 27, 2020

San Jose City Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Item 3.5 – Redistricting Commission

Dear Mayor Sam Liccardo and City Councilmembers,

I respectfully ask for your support for Councilmembers Jimenez, Peralez, Carrasco, Esparza, and Arenas' memorandum regarding the Redistricting Commission. Each decade, our City elected representatives take on the crucial task of ensuring fair and equal representation for Council Districts and for our community. With San Jose's diversity, it is the responsibility of our city government to make sure that we do not marginalize communities of color and our underserved.

As the Assemblymember representing almost half of San Jose, a majority of my constituents are Latino, and a majority have been disproportionately affected by the current pandemic. It is during times of need that we must have strong and supportive government representation to ensure fair distribution of services and assistance for our marginalized communities. This can only be done effectively through the inclusion of direct community engagement.

Recently, Mayor Liccardo introduced recommended changes to the redistricting process with limited time for staff analysis or significant community engagement. The redistricting process only happens every decade, so, needless to say, our engagement and decision will be important for our local democracy, and for our communities. By eliminating direct community outreach and formal engagement by redistricting commissioners, we are eliminating the voice of our communities of color. We are also eliminating a fair, inclusive, transparent, and democratic process for our constituents.

This can be done without any private conversations or fear of backroom influence by simply ensuring community engagement meetings and outreach be done publicly. By sheltering the commissioners from any community feedback outside of official meetings with limited public comment, we will not be allowing them to make decisions with comprehensive representative feedback from our diverse community. Our state process is an improvement over processes for redistricting in past decades, but has also faced legitimate concerns of lack of representative outreach.

Please reconsider these substantial changes, and support fair representation for all. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ash Kalra".

ASH KALRA