

November 22, 2021

Dear Alameda County Board of Supervisors:

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus wishes to comment on Alameda County’s ongoing redistricting process. We would like to thank you for your service and highlight certain redistricting-related legal requirements to ensure that the Board adopts a map that both represents all communities and complies with federal and state law. In addition, we urge the Board to continue prioritizing Community of Interest (COI) feedback before making its final map decision.

This redistricting cycle, jurisdictions in California must comply with both federal law and the FAIR MAPS Act. The following requirements apply when drafting and considering maps:

1. The final map must have districts that are substantially equal in population.
2. The final map must comply with the United States and California Constitutions as well as Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
3. The County must follow the required redistricting criteria laid out in the FAIR MAPS Act in this order of priority: contiguity; maintain neighborhoods and communities of interest; maintain cities and census designated places; follow natural and artificial boundaries; and compactness.
4. The County may not adopt a map that favors or discriminates against a political party, and cannot consider relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates when assessing communities of interest.

In particular, we wish to emphasize the importance of reviewing COI input. Respecting COIs is a highly ranked criterion, above others like compactness and keeping cities whole. COIs are highly ranked because they are so core to our system of representation, allowing people with similar interests to vote together and organize together. Please continue prioritizing COI input from the public, even as the redistricting process enters its final few weeks. We urge the Board to pay especially close attention to lower-income communities and other historically underrepresented groups that are still getting engaged or sharing new COI input.

Finally, we remind the Board that protecting incumbents and maintaining existing district shapes are not ranked criteria. We strongly urge you to disregard the interests of incumbency and remain open to shifts in the district structure. The current maps were drawn under a different legal scheme and with different population dynamics.

Thank you again for your commitment to making this a fair, open, and transparent process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 

Sincerely,

Sietse Goffard
Senior Voting Rights Program Coordinator
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus