

September 29, 2020

Commissioner Carolyn Williams
Commissioner Daniel M. Mayeda
Los Angeles County Redistricting Commission Co-Chairs

Re: Redistricting Community of Interest

Dear Co-Chairs Williams and Mayeda:

We write to you as Councilmembers of the City of Calabasas, a member city of the Las Virgenes/Malibu Council of Governments ("COG"). This is to express our strong support for the inclusion of the COG cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Westlake Village, and the unincorporated area from Topanga to the Ventura County line in one Community of Interest ("COI"). There are many compelling reasons which support this determination.

- 1) The five cities are entities separate and distinct from the City of Los Angeles, joined in a longstanding common COG. These COG cities, and virtually all of the area of the Santa Monica Mountains from Topanga Canyon (Route 27) west to Ventura County, are served by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Not by the City of Los Angeles.
- 2) The unifying geographic feature of these five cities is their location at the foot of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Coordination among these entities during wildfires, earthquakes, traffic challenges, and other emergencies is essential to coordinate a safe and prompt response and allow communication and evacuation to proceed in an orderly fashion. Numerous homes through this entire COG area are rural and keep livestock. Many of the roads are narrow or steep. This area creates a unique set of challenges.
- 3) A concern of all five cities is the risk and prevention of wildfires. The entire City of Calabasas and most of the Las Virgenes/Malibu COG are designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Calabasas itself was partially burned and entirely evacuated during the Woolsey Fire and will be again in the next fire. It is therefore critical for the City of Calabasas to be in the same

supervisory district as its COG partners and within the other communities within the area governed by the special fire hazard risk prevention standards of the LA County Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan. Calabasas, and its neighbors to the north and south, including Malibu, Hidden Hills, and Agoura Hills, all face a common, very real fire threat and need to be kept within the same County supervisory district to ensure responsiveness and public safety. Dividing Calabasas from Malibu or its other neighbors who are in the same fire risk hazard zone, and thus likely to all be facing the same fire at the same time, would leave Calabasas vulnerable to the risks that stem from fractured chains of commands and leadership. Maintaining the Las Virgenes COG in one district will help prevent these problems.

- 4) These COIs are served primarily by the Las Virgenes Unified School District and the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.
- 5) The area is dependent on four major state and local highways: the 101 freeway, Pacific Coast Highway, Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Malibu/Las Virgenes Road, and Kanan Road, all with unique regional challenges. Accordingly, it is important to underscore the geographic implications of our road configuration as a COI.
 - Travel eastward to the City of Los Angeles involves taking the 101 freeway over the Calabasas grade.
 - Travel westward to Simi Valley is only possible by travelling east to Topanga Canyon Boulevard or west to the 23 Freeway in Thousand Oaks.

These are long circuitous routes, especially during peak am/pm commuter hours. Those who live in our area do not feel any more connected to Simi Valley or the City of Los Angeles than they do to Camarillo or Oxnard. We have greater commonality with the City of Thousand Oaks and the southern part of Ventura County, all sharing the proximity to the Santa Monica Mountains NRA.

- 6) The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established a district office for this area in the City of Calabasas over 30 years ago. This was done in recognition of the need to be accessible to residents and businesses of the Las Virgenes and Conejo Valleys and their shared economic and community areas of interest.

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Los Angeles County Redistricting Commission Co-Chairs
Re: Redistricting Community of Interest
September 29, 2021
Page 4

- 7) Calabasas and the other cities in the Las Virgenes COG all contract with the Los Angeles County Sheriff and are policed from the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station. As a result, Calabasas and its COG cities partners speak effectively, as a bloc, in the city/county relationship regarding the Sheriffs' contract. This has enabled the cities to receive consistent, unified Sheriffs services and ensured that, when problems or concerns arose in the past, the cities were able to speak with one voice to one Supervisor regarding their Sheriffs' service needs. Dividing the COG cities who are all served by Lost Hills Station into two supervisorial districts would upend this strong, functional relationship and potentially put public safety at risk by dividing communications and leadership lines of responsibility.
- 8) It is noteworthy that Los Angeles County Measure W has defined our Watershed Committee to include these areas north of the Pacific Ocean in order to protect watershed and water quality from runoff into the Santa Monica Bay.
- 9) Lastly, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (National Park Service), California State Parks (Topanga, Malibu Creek State Parks, etc.), and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority ("MRCA") share a large area of land in and between these unincorporated areas and the cities in the region. Protecting natural resources and providing public access requires ongoing communication between the various jurisdictions in western Los Angeles County.

For these reasons and others, we feel strongly that this area is a natural Community of Interest, and, accordingly, should not have divided representation on the Board of Supervisors.

Thank you for your consideration.

CITY OF CALABASAS

James R. Bozajian, Mayor

Mary Sue Maurer, Mayor pro Tem

Commissioner Carolyn Williams
Commissioner Daniel M. Mayeda
Los Angeles County Redistricting Commission Co-Chairs
Re: Redistricting Community of Interest
September 29, 2021
Page 5

Peter Kraut, Councilmember

David J. Shapiro, Councilmember

Alicia Weintraub, Councilmember

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