



LULAC District 12
Andrew Sandoval, District Director

Carmel Unified School District
4380 Carmel Valley Road
Carmel, CA 93923

Dear Carmel Unified School District Trustees and Superintendent,

I am writing on behalf of LULAC District 12, which encompasses Monterey and San Benito Counties. We are interested in improving the accountability and responsiveness of future elected officials as well as the election system of Carmel Unified School District as a whole. As Carmel Unified School District continues to grow, it must adopt positive stateside trends in voting and elections in order to prevent voters from losing the ability to meaningfully engage in elections and community policymaking. At our LULAC District 12 February 2022 meeting, our District Board voted unanimously to request the Carmel Unified School District move toward district elections.

One of the growing trends in California is district elections. District elections have been shown to improve voter turnout and help governments respond to community concerns. Districts are the cornerstone of our state and federal systems. Accordingly, they have been adopted by numerous cities, community college districts, and school districts. Some of your neighboring cities, including Salinas, Monterey, and Greenfield adopted district elections as well as many school districts like Chualar Union, Santa Rita Union, Salinas Union, Pacific Grove Unified, and Gonzales Unified amongst others.

With regard to the Carmel Unified School District's elections, after studying demographics and election results, we believe that Carmel Unified School District would benefit from moving towards district elections. This would prevent Carmel Unified School District from being in violation of the California Elections Code sections 14025 et. seq., known as the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (CVRA). A Change mandated in the election system to prevent occurrences of voting patterns that impair the ability of voters to elect candidates of their choice or impair their rights to influence the outcome of an election, particularly as a result of the dilution or abridgment of its rights and privileges under state and federal law.

We therefore respectfully demand that the Carmel Unified School District change its at-large voting system to a district-based voting system that affords all voters and protected groups the equal opportunity to choose elected officials for Carmel Unified School District and, thereby, bring the system into compliance with the CVRA.

If the court finds a CVRA violation, the court has the authority to impose district-based elections and to determine district boundaries with input solely from the plaintiff's attorney and consultants, effectively *removing this authority* from the Carmel Unified School District and the community.

Finally, even if the public agency successfully defends a CVRA lawsuit, that success does not bar a subsequent challenge under the CVRA by a different plaintiff.

A few agencies have decided to defend against these actions, but none have prevailed on the merits. In addition to the low threshold for establishing a valid claim under the CVRA, the law also requires the school district to pay a plaintiff's attorney's fees and costs if the plaintiff prevails. Plaintiffs' attorneys' fees and costs in CVRA cases often amount to millions of dollars.

Please respond to this correspondence and include the Carmel Unified School District's plans to calendar a resolution and outline the steps it will take to facilitate the transition along with an estimated timeline. If the school district fails to take action within the statutory timeline to effect change in its election process, we may seek judicial assistance to enforce our remedies under the law. Per the CVRA, we will seek equitable relief and other forms of relief, including attorneys' fees.

We understand there is a pandemic and are aware of the need to maintain safe distances and exercise precautions. We have seen an increase in participation in public meetings with the many options currently available. Zoom, Google Meets, YouTube, and in-person are excellent ways to engage the community. Having interpretation available at all engagement meetings will allow all stakeholders to play a meaningful role in the process of moving towards district elections and drawing maps. We hope to see the school district be inclusive of all stakeholders. Finally, we request the Carmel Unified School District form a redistricting committee with stakeholders from all areas of the community in order to allow for a transparent and clear process for selecting maps.

We are hopeful that you will be able to work with us to achieve a timely transition in order to bring the Carmel Unified School District into compliance with the CVRA.

Thank you



Andrew Sandoval
LULAC District 12 Director

The Mission of the League of United Latin American Citizens is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health, and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.