



450 West Fourth Street
Suite 130
Santa Ana, CA 92701
Ph: 714-542-7792
Fax: 714-542-4853
latinohealthaccess.org

May 25, 2021

Mayor Sarmiento, Council Members, and Planning Commissioners
City of Santa Ana
20 Civic Center Plaza
P.O. Bo 1988, M31
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: Item #4: Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 2021-02 – Ali Pezeshkpour, Case Planner

Dear Mayor Sarmiento, City Council Members, and Planning Commissioners,

Latino Health Access has been proudly working alongside community residents for over 27 years to improve the social determinants of health in our city. We provide services that address immediate health needs while providing information and facilitating opportunities to increase civic participation and impact policies that will improve those social determinants in the long term. We urge you today to oppose the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 2021-02 that amongst other things, would prohibit housing dwellings with five or more rental agreements.

In recent years, we've heard the community consistently express that housing is the determinant most impacting their physical, mental, and emotional health. The lack of affordable housing and increasing rent costs for our extremely low income residents has forced people into overcrowded living conditions and rent-burden. According to the City's local data, 80% of Santa Ana renters are moderate, low and very low-income and 84% of residents hold low-income occupations that pay less than \$53,500 per year. The majority of Santa Ana's households (81%) are families. The proposed plan to ban all boarding houses in the city with more than five leases, likely meaning more than five different families, would negatively affect Santa Ana residents and contribute to the displacement of long-time residents.

In addition, we urge the Planning Commission and Planning staff to revisit the data that brought this proposed Amendment forward and explore a solution that will address the root cause of the issue rather than criminalize our families. According to the staff report, Code Enforcement has received an increased number of complaint calls related to the secondary impacts of overcrowded living such as noise, loitering second-hand smoke, trash, and increased parking demands. Staff reports a total of 50 complaints over the last 5 years (average of 10 calls per year)- a very low amount that merits a deeper analysis into the connection between the problem and the proposed solution. While the City may be trying to address an issue, this punitive approach would only allow for these already economically burdened families to be cited and criminalized rather provide housing opportunities that don't force families into these group living conditions.

In analyzing the data, we see a community that is living in housing conditions that are keeping them at the border between housed and unhoused. Even in these conditions, families are struggling, as evidenced by the over 3,200 applications that have been submitted for the city's rental assistance program (800 of which came from multi-lease residences). Families were living in these conditions before and we know the COVID-19 pandemic only made matters worse. The city's priority should be in providing housing stability for its residents that includes a short and long-term economic recover strategy that will directly benefit existing residents.

We urge you to oppose the proposed amendment that would further restrict housing options and instead explore the creation of new land use opportunities, policies and programs that will increase new affordable housing for Santa Ana's low income families.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Mejia', written in a cursive style.

Nancy Mejia, MSW, MPH
Chief Program Officer