



SONOMA COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Affiliated with California Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation

March 2, 2022

Members of the Senate Rules Committee
State Capitol, Room 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Opposing the nomination of Alegria De La Cruz to the Seismic Safety Commission

Sonoma County Farm Bureau, a general farm organization representing nearly 2,000 family farmers, ranchers, rural landowners, and agricultural businesses in Sonoma County, works to promote and protect policies that provide a prosperous local economy while preserving natural resources and a longstanding county agricultural heritage. We write today to respectfully inform you of our opposition to the confirmation of Alegria De La Cruz to the board of the California Seismic Safety Commission.

Ms. De La Cruz is a very bright and accomplished individual, but we are puzzled how she could find the time to appropriately serve the Commission given her many other responsibilities. Currently, she is:

- Director of the Office of Equity for Sonoma County;
- Director of Santa Rosa City Schools; and,
- Involved in many local organizations and causes.

Why would the Sonoma County Office of Equity director and a school board member also want to serve as a Commissioner to the Seismic Safety Commission? What is her motivation?

The stated mission of the Seismic Safety Commission is to provide decision-makers and the general public with cost-effective recommendations to reduce losses due to earthquakes and speed recovery. Given that California experiences more than 100 earthquakes a day and, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, costs about \$4.4 billion annually, it would be in California's best interest to have board members with specific expertise to offer. This appears to be validated with the other Commissioners who are experts in seismic engineering, architecture, emergency services, and related.

Ms. De La Cruz's main job is to lead Sonoma County's Office of Equity, yet we must wonder if she is committing enough time to that job?

To date, the Office of Equity has been a failure, as evidenced by the very public departure of the Executive Director of Sonoma County's Economic Development Board, Sheba Person-Whitley, this past fall. In a resignation email, dated October 27, 2021, that was obtained by our local newspaper, The Press Democrat, Person-Whitley cited a pattern of racial bias and microaggressions that made working for the county untenable for people of color. Again, this is the very job that our local tax dollars are paying Ms. De La Cruz to uphold.

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Given the alleged racial bias and microaggressions within the Sonoma County government, the last thing Ms. De La Cruz should be doing is taking on more responsibility with a statewide board position. There is a great deal of work to be done in Sonoma County, specifically with the DEI issues impacting the workforce. It would be better for Ms. De La Cruz to focus on these local issues as our Sonoma County taxpayers pay her.

We believe Ms. De La Cruz should be required to appear before the Committee and answer why she wants the board seat and what value would she add to the Commission? Does she genuinely have time to serve in this new capacity? How does she intend to use her new authority?

Finally, we all know earthquakes are very serious threats to all of us in California. We deserve a board that provides expertise and insight to benefit all Californians rather than politicize the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennifer Beretta".

Jennifer Beretta

President