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Opposition to Education First's Proposal

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April 10, 2023

Dear Members of the Land Use Committee of Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council,

I have lived in Los Angeles for over 40 years. My husband and I have called Bel Air Park our home for the past 20 years with our kids. What binds all of us who call LA home is our deep understanding and awareness of the risk to life and property from the far too frequent wildfires. On December 6, 2017 around 5:00 AM, I received a call from my friend and neighbor that there is a massive fire nearby. I frantically woke up my husband and started to text neighbors so they could prepare to evacuate. The Santa Ana winds were flying embers around. I was praying that the winds would stop and the direction of the fire would go towards itself. Within a couple hours our community was forced to evacuate, more correctly flee, our homes as the fast-moving fires raced up the Sepulveda corridor. What we were reminded of and quite evident was how approximately 500 residents from our community trying to escape a single lane road onto and already congested major thoroughfare, Mulholland Drive, was a daunting task.



My grave concern now is how the expansion of a school that for a half century had typically housed less than 200 to grow to 3-4x the size of our existing neighborhood, exposes the broader neighborhood and their very own students to an even greater risk of harm. If a fire broke out at 2am on one of the hillsides and the community only had minutes to evacuate, adding 1,200 students **and** faculty/services with the existing infrastructure from 50 years ago would result in an even more difficult transition to safety than we faced five years ago. Additional roads and exits are not planned and the school only plans to add to the congestion at our neighborhood's only (single lane) entrance and exit.

Casiano Road to Mulholland is not only used by Bel Air Park homeowners, Steven S. Wise School & Temple, AJU/EF but is also the exit for Bel Air Crest and all of the communities of Mountaingate if Sepulveda is closed. Casiano Road is the only way thousands of homeowners can escape.

I ask that this committee consider the safety of our longstanding community, the lives of the students on campus and the broader Mulholland area when considering whether this plan, as currently proposed, aids the safety of the community in times of fire danger, or more clearly, adds further obstacles to evacuations, first responders and a greater chance of loss of life.

I respectfully request, the Land Use Committee deny the current proposal for the elevated number of students to ensure the safety of all.

Sincerely,

Alina Vartany, Casiano Bel Air Homeowner Association board member
Armen Vartany