



To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Lamont, CA Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary, March 20th, 2024
Date: July 17, 2024

On March 20th, 2024, Racial Equity Commission Staff, Office of Planning Research Staff, Commission Chair Dr. Luke Wood, and Commissioner Traco Matthews visited Lamont, CA for the first Community Meet-n-Greet. The evening event – cohosted by the Racial Equity Commission, Kern Health Systems and the Lamont Elementary School District – was held in the cafeteria of Myrtle Avenue Elementary School and drew over 80 community members. Commission Staff collaborated with Commissioner Matthews' Health Equity team in planning this community event with a focus on listening to community experiences and priorities. The event had Spanish translation services provided by Kern Health Systems.



Opening Remarks

Commissioner Matthews and Executive Director Dr. Larissa Estes provided an overview of the Commission and its role in addressing racial equity. Dr. Estes expressed that the role of the Commission is to listen to community experiences and translate what they learn into content and information that informs the development of a racial equity framework, especially in the areas of budget equity, data, and community engagement. Lamont Elementary School District staff shared a presentation describing Lamont's unique demographic makeup and experiences of students and families. They shared initial results from a new telehealth in school program that aims to increase attendance by administering telehealth appointments at the nurse's office.

In the time since the program's launch two weeks prior, absentee rates had decreased compared to the previous year.



A student reporter from the CSU Bakersfield's The Runner newspaper captured the Community Meet-n-Greet in [this article](#).

Lamont community experiences and priorities

Commissioner Matthews and Dr. Estes led a small group discussion activity prompting community members to share a wish they have for their community if money were not an issue. The small



groups discussed, then shared out key themes to the full group. Below is a summary of key takeaways heard at the Meet-n-Greet in Lamont:

Housing

- Residents want affordable and well-maintained housing and greater opportunities for ownership.
- Residents shared their experiences being subject to changing rent amounts and expressed that they want stable rent amounts.

Investment in the Lamont community

- When Lamont youth reach adulthood, they move to the bigger cities nearby, such as Bakersfield, because of the economic opportunities there. Many residents want to see investments that support the creation of a community that makes those who grow up in Lamont want to stay and raise their own families. They want Lamont to be able to provide them with quality of life and economic opportunities like opportunities available in bigger cities such as Bakersfield.

Activities for young people and families

- Community members want more recreation options, especially for children. They want Lamont to have more after school programs for youth, including opening the local library open more frequently than its current two (2) days per week.
- Residents want to see the completion of community projects such as parks and infrastructure.



Education

- In two letters to the Commission, translated from Spanish, a Lamont parent expressed the importance of equality and equity among students within the school district. The parent shared that to them, equality and equity means universal access to quality education that meets the basic needs of students. If these does not exist, they said the results for students will be devastating.

Civic engagement

- Residents shared experiences of intimidation and retaliation when interacting with public systems.
- Residents shared their fears of the presence of law enforcement at public meetings. It was shared that for newcomers and those without status, their voices were limited in decisions that affect them.



Keeping tax dollars in Lamont

- Lamont is an unincorporated community in Kern County, CA. Many community members expressed a desire to gain more control over the spending of their county tax dollars through becoming incorporated.
- Residents want more government programs, including incentives, that are accessible to all.

Considerations for the Commission

These community meet-n-greets serve as an opportunity to gather testimony about the lived experiences of communities who may not otherwise share their experiences at public meetings. As the Commission continues to engage in discussions and develop recommendations on topics including budget equity, community engagement, the experiences of the Lamont Community and many more throughout California should be considered.

Prepared by Ashley Gerrity, Senior Program Analyst