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California State Senate

SENATOR
DAVE CORTESE
FIFTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT

CHAIR
LABOR, PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
& RETIREMENT
COMMITTEES
EDUCATION
HOUSING
TRANSPORTATION



February 2, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara
70 W. Hedding Street
10th Floor, East Wing
San Jose, CA

Dear Board President Susan Ellenberg (District 4), Supervisor Sylvia Arenas (District 1), Supervisor Cindy Chavez (District 2), Supervisor Otto Lee (District 3), and Supervisor Joe Simitian (District 5):

Each year, thousands of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander residents across Santa Clara County join in Lunar New Year festivities marking the end of winter and ushering in the start of spring. Celebrated as far back as 3,500 years ago, the Lunar New Year – also referred to as the Spring Festival – is a way to honor one’s ancestors and bless harvests at the turn of the year. Many Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, Korea and others, now celebrate Lunar New Year as a weeklong vacation holiday permitting many to travel back home to visit with their family.

As a county that prides itself on recognizing, equitably investing in, and living out its values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is important to continue to embrace and protect a culture’s long held customs and traditions. In doing so, we are able to promote greater cultural acceptance rooted in mutual compassion, empathy, and understanding for one another. Still reeling from the negative effects of anti-Asian and Asian American racial animus and prejudice in a post-COVID 19 world, designating Lunar New Year as an official county holiday ensures we set the course bending the arc toward justice. And there is local precedent. The San Francisco Unified School District, the City College of San Francisco, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and even the State of California through Assembly Bill 2596 (Low) have all approved and implemented Lunar New Year as a holiday in one form or another. With an estimated 41.4% Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander resident population, it is time the County of Santa Clara does too.

It is for these reasons, and more, that I am in full support of Supervisor Otto Lee’s Board Referral Agenda Item #31 relating to options for consideration on the viability and costs associated with declaring Lunar New Year a County holiday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Cortese".

Dave Cortese
Senator, District 15
California State Senate