



1055 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1660 Los Angeles, CA 90017-2499

T: (213)977-1035

F: (213)977-5457

www.cityprojectca.org

**Remarks by Erica Flores Baltodano, Baltodano & Baltodano LLP, for The City Project
Public Hearing California Coastal Commission Save Our Coast, Climate, and Commission for All!
Feb. 10, 2016, Morro Bay, CA**

My name is Erica Flores Baltodano and I am the founding partner of an employment law firm in San Luis Obispo. I am here today in my capacity as a National Advisory Councilmember for The City Project, a legal and policy organization committed to equal justice, democracy, and livability for all. The City Project, along with a coalition of more than 100 organizations representing *millions* of Californians from all over the state, strongly needs leaders like Dr. Lester.

I was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, where childhood trips to the beach were necessary as a matter of survival during triple-digit summer heat waves. As an attorney in Southern California, I spent nearly 10 years in my capacity as Assistant Director and Counsel for The City Project, working to ensure equal access to public resources, including our beloved beaches, for the benefit of *all* Californians. I now live on the Central Coast with my husband and two children and we visit our local beaches regularly.

Thank goodness for the work of this Commission, which is charged with the goal of protecting the coast while ensuring public access for *everyone*, including low-income communities, communities of color, visitors who come to the beach and support our Coastal economies, and residents of California who do not own beachfront property.

Amongst his many accomplishments, Dr. Lester has applied the new administrative penalty authority to remedy violations of public access and improved access to information on projects through adoption of a modern database. Significantly, under Dr. Lester's leadership, this Commission's 2015 sea level policy recognizes that coastal planning decisions *must* respond to environmental justice concerns and *must* include full and fair public participation of low-income communities and communities of color in planning efforts. These are tremendous accomplishments we simply cannot take for granted.

California's beaches represent one of our state's greatest natural treasures, but they have historically been closed off to many of our residents. *Free the Beach!*, a law review article that I wrote with The City Project's Robert García in the Stanford Journal and Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, provides a detailed overview of the history of discrimination at our beaches. It's a history of exclusion and discrimination we *must* be mindful of today. The City Project has submitted that article to the Commission. A great many residents of California do not have direct access to parks and open spaces so they rely on our public beaches. Yet, even today, they are routinely and illegally denied coastal access. We need Dr. Lester's continued leadership so that beach access is viewed as the civil rights issues it is.

Studies demonstrate that low-income communities and communities of color support environmental protection at rates exceeding those of non-Hispanic whites. However, it is these *very* communities that suffer first and suffer worst when coastal decision-making takes place behind closed doors and results in decisions that could jeopardize the lawful and nonpartisan implementation of the laws this Commission is charged with upholding.

As evidenced by the sizable and extraordinarily diverse coalition of Californians we represent, the continued leadership of Dr. Lester is not just a matter of conservation and coastal protection; it is a matter economic and environmental justice and access for all. We need leaders like Dr. Lester to ensure we continue moving forward for *all* Californians.

Healthy, Livable Communities For All

Board: Chris Burrows Robert García Penelope Glass
Tom Hayden Robbie LaBelle Lore Hilburg Lyndon Parker

The City Project is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization and a Project of Community Partners