To the community I serve and respective members of my fire board,

My name is Anthony Paolini and I am a firefighter-EMT for the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District. I have been a firefighter for this district for three years now. Since I started my career here in 2018 I have seen a lot of things change for the better. I am writing this letter because I feel the next step to enhancing our fire service for the public and our firefighters is annexation with Contra Costa County Fire.

The first topic I would like to touch on is opportunity. Contra Costa County Fire has a lot of opportunity. Contra Costa County Fire has a training support division, a prevention division, fire investigators, a new firefighter safety and wellness site in Pittsburg, depth of staffing, a bigger hiring pool, their own mechanic and maintenance shop and so much more. During my time here at the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District I have ridden the lows of the morale rollercoaster. I have seen firefighters leave or talk of leaving for bigger and better departments. I have seen our crews and specifically our medics mentally and physically exhausted after having to work five days straight. I have seen the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic when we had to drop from Advanced Life Support to Basic Life Support. How is this the best and most efficient service for our communities? With all the opportunities Contra Costa County Fire has to offer the morale of your firefighters will always remain high. Through these opportunities your Firefighters will have more options to specialize in specific areas in order to provide a better fire service to the public. It would be an incredible relief knowing that Contra Costa County Fire has the depth of staffing to tackle chores that our small department crews cannot always accomplish. Through annexation this would allow Rodeo-Hercules firefighters to focus more on being the best they can be in their positions of captain, engineer, and firefighter. We would have immediate access to real-world training grounds such as station 20 off Treat Blvd and MOTCO in Concord. Opportunity will mold the best of the best and this is why I believe the public will benefit from this annexation.

The second topic I would like to talk about is firefighter retention here at Rodeo-Hercules. I mentioned before I have seen this district change for the better. However it is a band aid on a much larger wound.

We need to look at the long term. I think our citizens and our firefighters deserve more and to me that more is Contra Costa County Fire. Our district is transforming from an older generation to a younger generation of young, energetic, and smart firefighters who are willing to serve. I do not want to see any of these firefighters leave for other departments if this annexation does not follow through. We will end up right back on the low morale rollercoaster. This does not produce the best fire service possible. I do not want to witness my chiefs and my captains suffer trying to hire new employees, get them trained up with limited resources for them to leave for other departments. Not to mention the cost of the revolving door of turnover. I hope the public would not want this either. If this annexation does not follow through there will continue to be new faces coming and going. The public will always struggle with getting to know and trusting their firefighters on a personal level. I would love for our existing firefighters to be annexed into Contra Costa County Fire and have the option to stay in Rodeo and Hercules and maintain those personal relationships with our citizens. I want the public to know that service will change. It will be enhanced and changed for the better.

The third thing I would like to talk about is firefighter safety. This annexation will improve firefighter safety tremendously. It will standardize everything we do as firefighters across the board in East, Central, and West counties. Everyone will be under the same roof. That way when we all show up to a fire we know exactly where specific hose lays are, how long they are and how to pull them. This is critical. This applies to everything we respond to as firefighters such as residential fires, commercial fires, vegetation fires, car fires, vehicle accidents and so much more. If all three districts become one the service improves and that is just one of the enhancements the public will see. I urge all of you to read about the Michelle Drive incident that took place in 2007 in San Pablo. We just had the 14th anniversary for that incident on 7/21. This annexation will bridge the gaps that we face with our policies and procedures, training, apparatus familiarization, fire ground operations and firefighter safety. Firefighter safety will also be increased through training. Contra Costa County Fire has real-world training grounds that mirror what we are actually experiencing on incidents. Trying to visualize what fire behavior will do while spraying water over a grass patch or

asphalt parking lot is not accurate. Enhancing firefighter safety will ensure that an incident like Michelle Drive never happens again.

In Conclusion, I thank you all for your time and hearing what I have to say. I am currently working at station 75 in Rodeo and I have personally heard some residents worry that they will be let down by this annexation. I am here to tell you that this will not happen. I do not want that to happen. Contra Costa County Fire will provide great opportunities for both RHFD firefighters and the public. We will become that destination department we have always talked about and not just a stepping stone. We will retain our employees and enhance our firefighter safety. Which in turn offers you the highest level of service. We will not let you down. Our rigs would no longer say Rodeo-Hercules, our shirts would no longer say Rodeo-Hercules but we will continue to serve the community with the same full hearts that we started our careers with. Letting down my community is the last thing I want to do so please be the change that makes this happen and you will see all the great things this annexation has to offer. Thank you.

Firefighter-EMT,

Anthony Paolini