

## **East Harlem Redistricting Testimony**

I am City Council Member Jessica Lappin, and I represent the Upper East Side of Manhattan and Roosevelt Island.

As the Commission knows, the redistricting process is not just about drawing lines on a map. It's about protecting and empowering our city's diverse communities of interest. My Council district borders East Harlem, and I share many of the concerns residents have expressed about the proposed lines for City Council District 8.

East Harlem, or El Barrio, is undoubtedly a community of interest, linked by common culture, history, language and institutions. It's part of what makes New York City the world's melting pot.

El Barrio has long been the center of Puerto Rican and Latino culture. Residents have benefited from having a single Council Member advocating for their unique needs, including Spanish-language services. The Commission's plan would carve out several parts of East Harlem with large Latino populations, and place them in neighboring council districts that are vastly different. Most notably, parts of two NYCHA developments that are almost 60% Latino, would be moved from District 8 to District 4, which is less than 7% Latino. This threatens to dilute the voices of those Latinos who are left out of the new district.

Under the Commission's plan, several of the institutions at the heart of East Harlem would be divided or removed from Council District 8. Sections of the Carver Houses development, which stretches from East 99<sup>th</sup> and East 106<sup>th</sup> Street between Madison and Park Avenues would be placed into District 4, as would parts of Lexington Houses, which runs from East 98<sup>th</sup> to East 99<sup>th</sup> Street from Park to Third Avenues.

The proposed lines cut out Mount Sinai Hospital, leaving only Metropolitan Hospital in the 8<sup>th</sup> Council District. This could impact El Barrio's ability to advocate for and receive health care services. In addition, the neighborhood's cultural gems should be within the borders of a single Council District. I'm glad that the Commission restored La Marqueta to its rightful place in the 8<sup>th</sup> District, and I hope that that El Museo del Barrio, and the new Caribbean Cultural Center remain there as well.

Finally, I am concerned that the proposed map cuts Randall's Island and Wards Island out of Manhattan and places them in a Queens council district. East Harlem is physically linked to Randall's Island by a footbridge and bus line, and the community has led efforts to access the area for recreational use. Both islands are part of Manhattan's precious green space, and they should remain a part of our borough.

East Harlem is an important part of New York City's cultural fabric, and its residents deserve fair representation on the City Council. I ask that you reconsider the proposed lines for District 8, to keep the East Harlem community intact.