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CITY OF NEW YORK  
2012-2013 DISTRICTING COMMISSION

THIRD ROUND  
PUBLIC MEETING

Hunter College  
965 Park Avenue  
New York, New York 10065

January 7, 2013  
6:15 P.M.

7 -----X

8

9 IN ATTENDANCE:

10 MADELINE PROVENZANO

11 FRANK PADAVAN

12 GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE

13 LINDA LIN

14 BENITO ROMANO, Chair

15 ROXANNE J. PERSAUD

16 THOMAS V. OGNIBENE

17 OSCAR ODOM, III

18 KAMILLAH M. HANKS

19 JAMILLA PONTON BRAGG

20 SCOTT CERULLO

21 ROBERT W. HART

22 JUSTIN YU

23 JOHN ROBERT

24 MARC WURZEL

25

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1           CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Good evening and thank you  
2           for coming tonight and welcome to the third round  
3           of the New York City Districting Commission's  
4           public hearing. My name is Benito Romano and I  
5           am the chair of the New York City Districting  
6           Commission. On behalf of the Commission, I want  
7           to thank President Jennifer Raab for hosting us  
8           here tonight.

9           We have the facility for only a few hours  
10          and I want to make sure that we hear from  
11          everyone who is signed up. For those of you who  
12          did not sign up and wish to speak, please see  
13          staff at the registration tables outside this  
14          room to register. Additionally, if you require  
15          interpretation of your testimony, please let  
16          staff at the registration desk know. They will  
17          make sure that an interpreter is provided when it  
18          is your turn to testify.

19          Before we take testimony, I want to make a  
20          few preliminary remarks. In December, the  
21          Commission advertised in community and ethnic  
22          newspapers throughout the city, announcing the  
23          Commission's public hearing schedule for the  
24          third round. An announcement was circulated to  
25          the press and an e-mail blast was sent to over

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1 over 5,500 individuals and organizations.  
2 Advocacy groups help spread the word through  
3 their separate networks and the hearings were  
4 noticed in the City Record and the hearing's  
5 schedule was publicized on our website as well as  
6 on our Facebook page and Twitter feed.

7 The hearing tonight is part of the third  
8 round of public hearings that the Commission will  
9 conduct throughout the City. Over 1,150 people  
10 attended the first two rounds of hearings in late  
11 August and October, and the Commission heard  
12 testimony from more than 230 of them.

13 On November 15, 2012, the Commission adopted  
14 by unanimous vote a revised plan for the 51  
15 councilman districts that reflected the testimony  
16 received during the first two rounds of hearings,  
17 in addition to online submissions of testimony  
18 and alternative maps created through our free  
19 map-making software on our website,  
20 [www.nyc.gov/districting](http://www.nyc.gov/districting).

21 Both prior to that meeting and immediately  
22 thereafter, we heard from the public and numerous  
23 advocacy groups including Common Cause, the  
24 Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund,  
25 Latino Justice, The Center for Law and Justice

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1 and the City Council's black and Asian caucus,  
2 calling for another round of hearings to enable  
3 the public to provide additional commentary on  
4 the revised plan before the City Council took  
5 action. Only by maximizing public input will we  
6 create a district plan that accurately reflects  
7 the complexity and diversity of our City.

8 In our transmittal letter that accompanied  
9 the revised plan to the City Council on  
10 November 19th, the Commission noted that it would  
11 welcome additional input from the public, but  
12 that the Commission was constrained by the  
13 deadlines set forth in the City charter, which  
14 directed the Commission to submit the revised  
15 plan to the City Council by early November.

16 That said, given the possibility that the  
17 Council would not return the revised plan to the  
18 Commission to allow for further public comment,  
19 and that the Council might instead allow the plan  
20 to be adopted simply by taking into action for  
21 the three-week period specified in the charter,  
22 the Commission considered mechanisms that would  
23 allow for another round of public hearings.

24 After consulting with the New York City Law  
25 Department, our legal counsel on these matters,

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1 the Commission convened on December 4, 2012 to  
2 consider continuing the public hearing process by  
3 withdrawing the revised district plan from the  
4 City Council. The Commission approved such a  
5 measure by a vote of 12 to zero, with one  
6 abstention. Now that the Commission has  
7 withdrawn the revised plan from the City Council,  
8 we are in a position to conduct this third round  
9 of public hearings.

10 The Commission is eager to hear tonight's  
11 testimony and comments on the revised district  
12 plan. As a result of tonight's hearing and the  
13 third round of hearings in its entirety, the  
14 Commission will consider all of the comments it  
15 will receive during the next scheduled public  
16 meeting on January 23rd. At that meeting, the  
17 Commission will charge the staff to make any  
18 amendments to the revised district plan that the  
19 Commission deems appropriate in light of the  
20 comments received during this round.

21 Then, at the Commission's public meeting on  
22 January 30th, an amended district plan reflecting  
23 those instructions will be presented and the  
24 Commission will decide whether to adopt the plan.  
25 If the Commission adopts the plan, it can then be

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1 submitted to the City Council which will have  
2 three weeks to either adopt or reject the plan.  
3 If the Council takes neither action, it will be  
4 deemed adopted.

5 If the Council objects to the plan, the  
6 Commission will then have another opportunity to  
7 revise the plan. This will then trigger a new  
8 set of public hearings to receive comment and  
9 feedback on such plan. It is again worth noting,  
10 although I have said this at every public  
11 meeting, that there are certain public factors  
12 that the law obligates the Commission to consider  
13 during the districting process.

14 These include: The difference in population  
15 between the least populous and the most populous  
16 districts shall not exceed 10 percent of the  
17 average population for all districts; fair and  
18 effective representation of racial and language  
19 minority groups in New York City should be  
20 maintained; neighborhoods and communities with  
21 established ties of common interest and  
22 association should remain intact; districts  
23 should be compact and contiguous; and districts  
24 should be kept within a single borough, if at all  
25 possible; and there should be efforts made to

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1           avoid diminishing the effective political  
2           representation of voters.

3                       Finally, again, I want to bring to your  
4           attention our website at [www.nyc.gov/districting](http://www.nyc.gov/districting).  
5           The site is the central repository of all the  
6           documents and videos relating to the Districting  
7           Commission. It also contains a complete schedule  
8           of our public hearings, all documents and plans  
9           created by and submitted to the Commission, our  
10          online mapping tool and a portal where you can  
11          preregister for all hearings and be added to our  
12          mailing list. I hope you will all visit the site  
13          and let me know how it is that it can become more  
14          informative and interactive.

15                      Now, that concludes my formal remarks. At  
16          this point, I would like to have the  
17          commissioners introduce themselves beginning on  
18          my far right with Frank Padavan.

19                      MR. PADAVAN: Queens County.

20                      MS. HANKS: Kamillah Hanks, Staten Island.

21                      MR. CERULLO: Scott Cerullo, Staten Island.

22                      MR. ODOM: Oscar Odom, III, Brooklyn.

23                      MR. ROBERT: John Robert, The Bronx.

24                      MS. BRAGG: Jamilla Ponton Bragg, Manhattan.

25                      CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Benito Romano, Manhattan.

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1 MR. HUM: Carl Hum, staff to the Commission.

2 MS. WOLFE: Gloria Carvajal Wolfe,  
3 Manhattan.

4 MR. YU: Justin Yu, Manhattan.

5 MS. LIN: Linda Lin, Queens.

6 MS. PERSAUD: Roxanne Persaud, Brooklyn.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Thaddeus Hackworth, general  
8 counsel to the Commission.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Now, Thaddeus Hackworth,  
10 our general counsel, will go over some ground  
11 rules for the testimony and then call our first  
12 speaker.

13 MR. HACKWORTH: So, before I call the first  
14 speaker, I will explain the ground rules for  
15 giving testimony tonight. Each speaker has three  
16 minutes to testify. When your three minutes has  
17 expired, you will hear a chime. At that point,  
18 please finish your sentence and yield the  
19 microphone to the next speaker.

20 Because the Commission only has the use of  
21 these facilities until 9:00, taking more than  
22 your three minutes of time may result in your  
23 neighbor or fellow community member not being  
24 able to speak at all. Please keep that in mind  
25 and be respectful of others wishing to testify.



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1           If you would like to provide more detailed  
2           testimony to the Commission, you are encouraged  
3           to submit your written testimony by providing a  
4           copy at the registration desk or by e-mailing it  
5           to [hearings@districting.nyc.gov](mailto:hearings@districting.nyc.gov), or by mailing it  
6           to the Commission's office.

7           I will first call those who have  
8           preregistered to speak, followed by those who  
9           have registered today at the desk. I will  
10          announce the next speaker as well as the  
11          following speaker. When you hear your name  
12          called, please approach the nearest microphone so  
13          that you can be ready to give your testimony when  
14          your name is called. If you have any questions,  
15          please is it your staff members at the  
16          registration desk.

17          I will now call our first speaker, James  
18          Hong, to be followed by Rachael Fauss.

19          MR. HONG: Hello, good evening, members and  
20          staff of the Districting Commission, Chairman  
21          Romano, citizens and residents of Manhattan. My  
22          name is James Hong and I am the civic  
23          participation coordinator for the Minkwon Center  
24          for Community Action. And today, I speak here on  
25          behalf of AACCRD, a coalition, the Asian American

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1 Community Coalition on Redistricting and  
2 Democracy.

3 AACCRD is a coalition of groups that believe  
4 that redistricting is vital and an essential part  
5 of what protecting the rights of Asian-Americans  
6 to vote. And we believe the Commission today has  
7 a wonderful opportunity in this third round to  
8 hear the public's concerns over the December 4th  
9 draft. And AACCRD has advocated for this kind of  
10 opportunity, and our sincere hope is that we will  
11 all work for the good of New York City's  
12 residents and put aside our allegiances so the  
13 next revision will truly reflect a diverse and  
14 changing New York City.

15 And by now, I am sure you are all aware of  
16 AACCRD's position regarding Manhattan,  
17 specifically Lower Manhattan. So, I just want to  
18 say that we believe the Commission's independence  
19 seems to be compromised when the voices of  
20 sitting City elected officials has been forced on  
21 the outcome of redistricting. From a strictly  
22 legal perspective, it is safe to do so given that  
23 incumbent's protection has been ruled a  
24 quote/unquote lawful aim of redistricting.

25 But it is in no way mandated. We believe

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1 our city's charter actually calls for a higher  
2 standard when it states that ethnic communities  
3 and communities of interest should be recognized  
4 by the Districting Commission. And so we urge  
5 the Commission to aim higher. And just because  
6 something happens to pass legal muster, it don't  
7 mean that it's right. And this not only goes for  
8 Lower Manhattan but for every borough and for  
9 every neighborhood in the City.

10 We finally want to urge the Commission to  
11 have a bit more transparency and not to repeat  
12 the process taken on November 15th of last year.  
13 That was when the Commission revealed and then  
14 voted on the districting plan within minutes and  
15 within the same meeting. Literally, no one in  
16 the public outside of the individuals at the  
17 meeting of the commissioners had a chance to see  
18 how New York City would be divided for the next  
19 decade to come.

20 We believe that the public should know what  
21 is going to be voted on by this Commission as  
22 well as have a forum in which the commissioners  
23 can hear what kind of impact their final map will  
24 have. There must be time for the public to  
25 digest and then respond to that map, even if it

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1 is at the final meeting of the commissioners and  
2 even if the Commission will not necessarily  
3 revise the map further based on that forum and  
4 they will vote on that as introduced.

5 So, that is our recommendation to this  
6 Commission. We thank you for your service. We  
7 know that it's been going on probably longer than  
8 you have expected and many of us have expected,  
9 but it is worth it for us and for the City and  
10 for everyone here that you take the  
11 responsibilities of this Commission and we hope  
12 that you will listen to our recommendations.  
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you, Mr. Hong.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Rachael  
16 Fauss, followed by Daniel Marks Cohen.

17 MS. FAUSS: Good evening, Chair Romano and  
18 other members of the City's Districting  
19 Commission. My name is Rachel Fauss and I am the  
20 policy and research manager of Citizens Union, a  
21 nonpartisan, good-government group dedicated to  
22 making democracy work for all New Yorkers.

23 Today I am focusing my remarks on Manhattan  
24 and the need for additional transparency, but we  
25 will be testifying at subsequent hearings. We

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1 have also sent a letter to the Commission today,  
2 which contains our full recommendations. Having  
3 supported the Commission's withdrawal of its  
4 previous maps, we are pleased that it is holding  
5 this third round of public hearings.

6 However, the initial set of maps provided to  
7 the Council was transmitted without a full  
8 written explanation of the thinking behind the  
9 Commission's decision was unacceptable. We  
10 recommend that the Commission provide for an  
11 unprecedented transparency of its decision-making  
12 by providing publically-written documentation of  
13 the rationale for drawing each district upon the  
14 completion of public hearings and before final  
15 maps are voted on by the Commission.

16 The districting process is often done by  
17 trade-off, but without information about the  
18 choices that were made, the public may be  
19 understandably cynical about the end results,  
20 regards of the Commission's intentions.

21 Regarding districts in Manhattan and  
22 throughout the City, we are troubled it appears  
23 that incumbency was considered ahead of comments  
24 from the public regarding their own communities.  
25 While the Commission is correct in considering

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1           incumbency is permissible under case law, it is  
2           not required. We oppose its use in the  
3           redistricting process, particularly when it  
4           appears criteria in the City charter regarding  
5           keeping communities of interest whole came out at  
6           its expense.

7                     For example, Districts 1 and 2 remain  
8           largely the same under the revised maps despite  
9           recommendation from the public to join Chinatown  
10          with the Lower East Side. The Commission voiced  
11          its rationale for keeping these separated into  
12          two districts as being what was requested by the  
13          incumbents. And without a full rationale of your  
14          decision, the public was left to assume that the  
15          incumbency came at the expense of creating a  
16          stronger input district for Asian-American  
17          community. We urge you to reconsider uniting  
18          this community and to provide a written rationale  
19          for your final decision.

20                    We are also concerned about District 8 as it  
21          continues to separate East Harlem. Those certain  
22          landmarks, such as La Marqueta, were added back  
23          in. Additionally, as Commissioner Wurzel noted,  
24          the Commission may run afoul of the compactness  
25          criterion in the City charter. While there may

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1 have been valid reasons for the changes made,  
2 absent any written formal explanation, the public  
3 is left to wonder why. For example, public  
4 concern has been raised concerning Randall's  
5 Island and its inclusion into District 22, and  
6 there has not been sufficient explanation of this  
7 decision.

8 We are also concerned by including more of  
9 District 8 into the Bronx. The average size of  
10 Manhattan's districts is over 4 percent above the  
11 ideal district, resulting in the  
12 underrepresentation of the residents of  
13 Manhattan. This imbalance can and should be  
14 corrected by including more of East Harlem in  
15 District 8. Thank you for the opportunity to  
16 testify.

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Daniel  
18 Marks Cohen, followed by William Sanford, Jr.

19 MR. COHEN: Good evening, my name is Daniel  
20 Marks Cohen and I am the New York State  
21 Democratic Committeeman representing the 69th  
22 Assembly District of Manhattan' Upper West Side  
23 and the New York State Democratic Committee.

24 The part of the Upper West Side I live in  
25 between 96th Street and 125th Street is,

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1 according to the latest census, the poorest  
2 portion of the 69th Assembly District. It is the  
3 least-served in terms of services and  
4 transportation in a survey conducted by the  
5 Straphangers Campaign. NYPD data indicates it  
6 has more crime than the rest of the district.

7 I believe at least one reason for its  
8 consistent and uneven status is the fact that  
9 69th is cut up into multiple pieces. There are  
10 now three council members, the 6th, the 7th and  
11 the 9th Who have different pieces of this  
12 neighborhood. This is not to the benefit of  
13 anyone and it hurts Manhattan Valley residents by  
14 divides the community into pieces preventing them  
15 from having a unified voice and an impact on any  
16 one council district.

17 This is my fourth time testifying about  
18 redistricting and the third before this panel.  
19 And I am disappointed to be here again stating  
20 once more my dissatisfaction with the  
21 Commission's results. My colleagues in the  
22 69th AD and several legislators have testified  
23 that the Upper West Side, and in particular the  
24 Morningside Heights, would be best served if kept  
25 unified into one district and not sliced up into



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1 multiple pieces.

2 Even the representative with the majority of  
3 the Manhattan Valley neighborhood, Council Member  
4 Indez Dickens, has testified before this body  
5 that she would like the 9th to end at 110th  
6 Street and not sneak down to 100th Street, a  
7 long, politically meaningless finger that splits  
8 my neighborhood into two.

9 There is still time to rectify this  
10 situation and I plead with this panel to see the  
11 wisdom of keeping our community together rather  
12 than tearing it apart. The easiest solution is  
13 to move the border so that everything west of  
14 Central Park and Morningside Park is in the 7th.  
15 If this causes the 7th to exceed its capacity,  
16 move the line of the 6th District north to pick  
17 up some additional voters.

18 I propose the Commission redraw the lines  
19 more naturally to keep Manhattan Valley's  
20 representation on the West Side where it belongs,  
21 rather than as an appendage to another district  
22 for incumbency or demographic reasons. I implore  
23 you to reconsider the lines while there is still  
24 time to make changes and not leave our community  
25 stuck with an intractable situation for the next

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1 decade. Thank you.

2 MS. BRAGG: Can you state your  
3 recommendations for the borders again, please?

4 MR. COHEN: Yes, to move all of the 7th -- I  
5 will read my testimony exactly. "The easiest  
6 solution is to move the borders so that  
7 everything west of Central Park and west of  
8 Morningside Park is in the 7th. And if this  
9 causes the 7th to exceed its capacity, simply  
10 move the line from the 6th north."

11 You see the map behind you on the wall.  
12 There is this crooked finger that comes down from  
13 the 9th picking up a portion of voters in  
14 Manhattan Valley and Morningside Heights. If you  
15 were to eliminate that, just go across 110th  
16 Street, that would be cleaner, more compact.

17 Does that clarify?

18 MS. BRAGG: Yes, thank you.

19 MR. COHEN: Thank you very much.

20 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is William  
21 Stanford, Jr., to be followed by David Nocenti.

22 MR. STANFORD: The name is Mr. X. Now that  
23 we cleared that, Thaddeus, you want to tell me  
24 what this is? This is like a coloring book. You  
25 call these maps? This is a coloring book shown

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1 in black and white. I can't read this. I need a  
2 magnifying glass for this. You know what this  
3 remind me of? That song "We've Come to Magnify  
4 the Lord: "Although we are not magnifying God.  
5 We are magnifying you instead.

6 I'm sorry, this is sloppy. Like I said,  
7 these maps, I can't read these maps. They are  
8 shown in black and white. You have the color  
9 version behind you. You gave us the black and  
10 white 1950s version because you are too cheap to  
11 use a color ink cartridge. Why? I don't know.  
12 You make a lot more money than me, a hell of a  
13 lot more money than me and you can't use a color  
14 cartridge.

15 I don't know why we are here. You know, we  
16 wasted time with you during rounds one and two,  
17 and now we are wasting time during round three.  
18 You know what I could be doing right now? I  
19 could be at home watching (unintelligible) rather  
20 than deal with you. But I figure someone can  
21 take it from me and then I can just embarrass you  
22 like I did during rounds one and two.

23 As I said before, I understand you have to  
24 redraw the lines every ten years. Some people  
25 will like your decision; some people won't. But

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1 as I said during rounds one and two, just in case  
2 you either ignored or misunderstood me, just in  
3 case you ignored and/or misunderstood me, if you  
4 want to draw the lines fairly, you should go by  
5 the bus corridors, especially here in Manhattan.  
6 This borough is the easiest to cover. Just go by  
7 the bus corridors, okay?

8 You have lines zigzagging like zigzagged  
9 scissors. You are not using a sewing machine.  
10 You are not designing clothes for anyone  
11 including yourselves. So, why not just cut  
12 across, go by the bus corridors? Isn't that what  
13 I said during rounds one and two? Yes. Were you  
14 listening? I don't think so. Your hard head  
15 will give you a soft behind, okay?

16 And by the way, you had a public meeting on  
17 December 4th which I was unaware of, which I  
18 discovered on December 6th because your chair,  
19 a/k/a Mr. Potatohead, never bothered to e-mail it  
20 to me, never bothered to e-mail these events to  
21 me. I had to log into your website in order to  
22 preregister, which is good because if I  
23 preregister, I get first priority. If I  
24 register, I get second priority. That sounds  
25 like three rows apart, but that's another story.

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1           You know, if I you my contact information,  
2           it would be in your best interest to e-mail all  
3           events to me. That would be gladly appreciated.  
4           Consider doing that, okay? And also, as I said  
5           before, you want to draw them lines fairly, just  
6           go by the bus corridors. I'm sorry I couldn't  
7           draw them for you in the past, but I don't have  
8           no computer. Some of you have your own computer.  
9           I don't have my own computer, so I have to go out  
10          of my way to gain access to one.

11          But that doesn't mean I didn't want to be  
12          bothered. Without my own computer, it's hard for  
13          me to draw the lines. But I am still willing to  
14          help you. I am willing to work with you. That's  
15          if you want to work with me. But the impression  
16          I am getting here is, you don't want to work with  
17          me. You don't want to extend your hand to me,  
18          but you want me to extend my hand to you. I  
19          don't think so.

20          What's happening over here? What's with  
21          these private conversations? What's with these  
22          private conversations? You gotta use the  
23          bathroom? Sit back down. What is with these  
24          private conversations? This isn't male-bonding  
25          hour. What kind of narcissism is that? Come on.

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1           As I said during round one, I testified in  
2           Brooklyn and one of these board members forgot to  
3           turn off his cell. His cellphone rang  
4           while I was speaking. I said turn it off or put  
5           it on vibrate while I was speaking. That would  
6           be gladly appreciated. And now you are engaging  
7           in a private conversation? What was that about?  
8           That's unprofessional.

9           As I said before, you have ten districts  
10          here in Manhattan. You got 145th Street, 125th  
11          Street, 57th Street, 47th Street, 34th Street,  
12          14th Street, Chambers Street, Fulton Street,  
13          okay, Lexington Avenue, Third Avenue, Park  
14          Avenue, Broadway, Fifth Avenue. You can do  
15          better -- (timer dings) -- with these plans, with  
16          these maps. Like I said, this is atrocious.  
17          It's a coloring book.

18                 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

19                 MR. STANFORD: Yes, thank you.

20                 MR. HACKWORTH: There appears to be a  
21          problem with our countdown clock. I don't know  
22          if it's running in seconds, but it's exceeding  
23          three minutes by a large margin. I am going  
24          to -- sorry, we should resolve this in a moment.

25                 While we are working on that, I will call

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1 the next speaker and I will let you know when you  
2 have 30 seconds left. Our next speaker is David  
3 Nocenti, to be followed by Marina Ortiz.

4 MR. NOCENTI: Chairman Romano, members of  
5 the Commission, my name is David Nocenti. I am  
6 the executive director of Union Settlement  
7 Association, which is the oldest and largest  
8 social service provider in East Harlem. I  
9 promise I will stay to the 180 seconds. I feel  
10 this is déjà vu all over again. I was at the  
11 October 29th hearings and it was fairly clear to  
12 anyone there that East Harlem, the residents of  
13 East Harlem, which is the district north of 96th  
14 Street and east of 5th Avenue was speaking  
15 clearly with one voice in opposition to the  
16 preliminary lines.

17 East Harlem is clearly a community of common  
18 interest, racial, economic, social, religious,  
19 and has been there since 1895. We were very  
20 hopeful the Commission would hear the voice of  
21 East Harlem and would make changes to the  
22 preliminary map. To, I think, everyone's  
23 surprise, the changes made things actually worse  
24 rather than better.

25 The preliminary map took 29 blocks out of

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1 East Harlem, further dividing the neighborhood.  
2 The revised map takes 34 blocks out of East  
3 Harlem, which is even worse than the preliminary  
4 map. It takes the Carver, NYCHA Carver Houses,  
5 it splits them in two and it takes the NYCHA  
6 Lexington Houses and splits them in two. It  
7 takes the community surrounding Mount Sinai,  
8 which has been in East Harlem since 1904, and  
9 takes that out of Council District 8 as well.

10 As the Commission is aware, there are seven  
11 criteria that you use. The first two are  
12 population equity and trying to preserve  
13 representation for minority populations. The  
14 third is keeping communities of interest intact.  
15 And that was violated by the preliminary map and  
16 violated even more so by the revised map.

17 The charter makes clear that the Commission  
18 is required to follow these criteria in priority  
19 order and to take them into account to the  
20 maximum extent possible. Thankfully, the unity  
21 map produced by PRLDEF and AALDEF and the Common  
22 Cause map have shown that you can keep the  
23 communities of interest, in particular East  
24 Harlem, intact without violating either of the  
25 first two criteria.



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1           And so, we think that that is what the  
2           Commission should be doing and restoring the  
3           blocks that were taken out of East Harlem back.

4           MR. HACKWORTH: 30 seconds.

5           MR. NOCENTI: So, we were hoping that the  
6           Commission would hear from East Harlem. We were  
7           definitely loud. I thought we were clear at the  
8           last hearing the first time around. So, I would  
9           respectfully hope that the Commission take East  
10          Harlem's interest and voice in mind into the  
11          final maps to provide to the City Council. Thank  
12          you very much.

13          MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
14          Marianna Ortiz, to be followed by the Honorable  
15          Councilwoman Rosie Mendez and Margarita Lopez.

16          MS. ORTIZ: Did you mean Marina Ortiz?

17          MR. HACKWORTH: Marina Ortiz.

18          MS. ORTIZ: Yes, thank you. I want to thank  
19          you for all the work up done and the time you  
20          have taken to listen to us. But I know that the  
21          decisions are made elsewhere. So, I will spare  
22          you my wrath and direct it to go straight to the  
23          source.

24          So, dear Speaker Quinn, I know you are not  
25          here tonight, but hopefully you are listening.

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1           If you recall, we welcomed you to East Harlem  
2           when you came to hear our concerns about  
3           affordable housing. Of course, you ignored the  
4           solution we proposed to turn thousands of vacant  
5           lots and empty buildings and elsewhere in the  
6           city into homes for those in need. Many of our  
7           stakeholders continue to welcome you at each and  
8           every ribbon-cutting ceremony for commercial  
9           tenants have failed to meet that local hiring  
10          threshold they promised, or private charter  
11          schools developments built on public housing  
12          land.

13                 Others even welcomed you back to the East  
14          Harlem last week to kick off our Three Kings Day  
15          Parade, which ones from El Museo del Barrio to La  
16          Marqueta which, as you know, is the cultural  
17          landmark your commission had planned to remove  
18          from our district during the last go-round.

19                 Personally, I do not support your record  
20          with regards to my neighborhood and I oppose your  
21          current plan to decimate my community. I am  
22          appalled that you would jeopardize our  
23          constitutional right to have equitable  
24          representation at the City Council level for what  
25          some say is straight-up political retribution.

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1           As you may know, Speaker Quinn, I was a  
2           plaintiff in two lawsuits that successfully  
3           prevented the City from contracting with private  
4           schools to grant them exclusive, after-school  
5           access to public ball fields on Randall's Island.  
6           So, I take personal issue with your plan to  
7           remove 40 percent of our public park land -- that  
8           is 255 acres -- from our district. Randall's  
9           Island is our backyard and it is the people of  
10          East Harlem and the South Bronx who should have a  
11          say about what happens there.

12          Randall's Island is also home to 1,500  
13          adults who can't afford to live in their own  
14          district or anywhere else in the city. What  
15          would happen, I wonder, if each and every one of  
16          those people were to register for the upcoming  
17          mayoral election? Do you think this mostly  
18          African American and Latino constituency would  
19          appreciate the fact that you gave control over  
20          their well-being to an unseen, unknown legislator  
21          from Queens? Do you honestly think that  
22          Latinos --

23                 MR. HACKWORTH: 30 seconds.

24                 MS. ORTIZ: -- and throughout the city will  
25          ever forget that you allowed our home, our "una,"

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1 to be carved out and handed over to the Harlem,  
2 Bronx and Queens political machinery? I implore  
3 you to reconsider your plan. This community is  
4 about much more than real estate and political  
5 vendettas. You have the power to turn this  
6 around, just as we have the power to decide who  
7 will be the next mayor of New York City. Thank  
8 you.

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be the  
10 Honorable Councilwoman Rosie Mendez and Margarita  
11 Lopez, to be followed by Betsy Feist. And we are  
12 going to give the clock another try here.

13 MS. MENDEZ: Thank you, commissioners. It's  
14 a little quieter than the last time I was here  
15 testifying before you. So, as the last time, I  
16 want to reiterate a couple of issues. There are  
17 the Unity Coalition, which are a couple of  
18 groups, NAACP, Latino Justice PRLDEF, AALDEF and  
19 now Citizens Union is calling for consolidation  
20 of Districts 1 and 2.

21 And I am against that for various reasons.  
22 It makes a majority/minority district in  
23 District 1, but then we lose the Latino district  
24 in District 2 and we also sacrifice the LGBT  
25 district in District 3.

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1           Per my testimony the last time where I was  
2           being stretched all the way into the West Side,  
3           and I said I was an East Side council member, and  
4           I always refer to myself as the lesbian of the  
5           east -- and there is a lesbian of the west who  
6           will be term-limited -- thank you for keeping me  
7           on the East Side. I continue to be the lesbian  
8           of the east.

9           But there is a couple little nuances. So,  
10          there is one square block currently in my  
11          district. It has been there for 20 years between  
12          34th and 35th Street between Lexington and Third  
13          Avenue, which is taken out of my district. I  
14          respectfully request that it be put back in.  
15          It's been there for more than two decades. It  
16          should continue to be part of District 2.

17          And the constituents who reside on that  
18          block in those want to remain part of my  
19          district. It is a community of interest and we  
20          worked very closely together around the 34th  
21          Street transit way. So, excluding that block, I  
22          think creates an issue.

23          I also gave testimony the last time about  
24          several things that were taken out ten years ago  
25          during the redistricting that were not put back

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1 in that I asked be put back in. A couple of  
2 square blocks between Pitt Street and Norfolk,  
3 between Houston Street and Stanton was always  
4 part of District 2, was taken out ten years ago.  
5 And then two buildings that were in the very  
6 southern part of the district in District 1 were  
7 put into District 2, and four buildings that were  
8 in District 2 were put into District 1. And I  
9 have spoken to the council member there. And  
10 what it does, it divides Gouverneur Gardens and  
11 Mitchell-Lama.

12 I have two buildings; Margaret Chin has  
13 four. We are asking that all six buildings as a  
14 community of interest be kept in District 1 where  
15 it was prior to ten years ago. We are asking  
16 that the other four buildings out of 24 joint  
17 District 2 where it always has been, Vladeck  
18 Houses, as a community of interest, it be kept  
19 together. And we are asking for those square  
20 blocks, like I said, between Norfolk and Pitt  
21 Street, to be put back into District 2 where it  
22 was prior to the last redistricting.

23 Also in your last maps, you had included  
24 Bellevue Hospital -- (timer dings) -- and that  
25 also brought up some of the minority population

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1 in my district. And that hospital is used by my  
2 constituents. And I spoken to Dan Garodnick and  
3 we think that the Commission should put it into  
4 District 2. Thank you for giving me this  
5 opportunity to testify. And I am saying is it  
6 should be kept basically whole and we should go  
7 back and add in things that were subtracted ten  
8 years ago and what was deleted that had been  
9 there should be put back. And thank you so much.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
11 Betsy Feist, followed by Jane Swanson. And just  
12 to clarify, the counter is now counting in  
13 seconds. So, you have to do a little math there.

14 MS. FEIST: My name is Betsy Feist. I  
15 reside in what is now the 5th City Council  
16 District, and I am president of East Side  
17 Democratic Club.

18 MR. HACKWORTH: Could you step a little  
19 closer to the mic?

20 MS. FEIST: Oh, I'm sorry. Is this better?  
21 I and my club support the nonpartisan  
22 redistricting process and thank you for your  
23 efforts. Although the club is a partisan  
24 organization, it prides itself in serving the  
25 entire community by providing information about

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1 the issues and concerns of our neighborhoods and  
2 serving as a link to governmental institutions.  
3 We live in a cohesive community and all residents  
4 of common interests and shared concerns about our  
5 infrastructure and amenities, including  
6 everything from transportation to housing to our  
7 parks, shops and restaurants.

8 It is important that this community not be  
9 severed artificially, that we remain connected to  
10 each other and to the institutions that support  
11 us as individuals in our community as a whole.  
12 Therefore, the new district should conform as  
13 closely as possible to the existing one and avoid  
14 jigs and jags that is making it hard even to know  
15 what district one is in at a given moment.

16 Specifically, in the area of 79th Street, it  
17 should include the three blocks that have been  
18 cut out of that Second Avenue. Thank you for  
19 your attention.

20 MR. HACKWORTH: I inadvertently thought that  
21 Councilwoman Lopez was sharing time with  
22 Margarita Lopez, so we skipped over Margarita  
23 Lopez. At this time, we can hear testimony from  
24 her, Margarita Lopez, followed by Jane Swanson.

25 MS. LOPEZ: I'm sorry about the confusion.



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1 But Council Member Mendez and I, although we both  
2 are lesbians of the east, we are not the same  
3 person. We are two different individuals.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Duly noted.

5 MS. LOPEZ: Thank you for the consideration.  
6 First, I want to thank all of you for the work  
7 that you have been doing in putting together the  
8 democratic process that all of us consider so  
9 dear to each and every one of us. I want to make  
10 one exception is Justin. It's a pleasure to see  
11 you tonight. I have not seen you in a while and  
12 it's great to see you sitting in there.

13 My purpose of being here is for my personal  
14 time and my membership to the City Council when I  
15 used to be the council member of District 2. I  
16 come here that tell you that the lines that you  
17 have currently in place for District 2, which is  
18 the subject of my presentation today, are a very  
19 good approach to the lines in that district.

20 You only missing a couple of things, and  
21 they are similar to the ones that Council Member  
22 Mendez mentioned. I am repeating the same speech  
23 I made in 2000, the same speech that I made in  
24 1990 when the lines were going to be redrawn.  
25 And at that time, in 1990, the Commission decided

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1 to split Baruch Houses in a way that is not  
2 healthy or appropriate for that community or for  
3 interest.

4 Today, I am coming to ask you to put Baruch  
5 Houses together again. It is not helpful for  
6 communities of interest to be split down the  
7 middle because it creates issues that are  
8 pertinent to people's participation in the  
9 democratic process of the community. And on top  
10 of that, it has an impact, a direct impact on  
11 issues that have to do with policing, issues that  
12 have to do with representation and issues that  
13 have to do with election of those individuals.

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Just tell us where the  
15 Baruch Houses are?

16 MS. LOPEZ: Baruch Houses is -- the street,  
17 it's located on Henry Street. It's one of the  
18 streets. Madison Avenue is another, and I  
19 believe that Clinton is another, if I am not  
20 mistaken. Those are the squares, and FDR Drive.  
21 And that is a development of the New York City  
22 Housing Authority.

23 Then, at the time, that area was split in  
24 two. That is not helpful. The same thing  
25 happened by removing a particular block that

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1 contained a Section 8-based building that is  
2 located on Clinton, on the building behind it,  
3 the street behind, it's Houston, and the other  
4 one is Rivington, I believe.

5 Same situation happening there, taking that  
6 particular part of the district out, leaving it  
7 in the limbo without representation that is  
8 adequate with the continuation of the community  
9 that that building is part of. That building is  
10 for -- (timer dings) -- and it was built by the  
11 community that surround that place.

12 And the last point I want to make, it is  
13 absolutely unacceptable to try to merge  
14 District 1 with District 2. It is not helpful to  
15 any member of those two communities. It doesn't  
16 help to the political empowerment of the  
17 communities that live there. The proof is in the  
18 pudding. It's a Native American elected to  
19 District 1. It's a Latino woman elected to  
20 District 2. What else do you need? You have it  
21 right there. Thank you very much.

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
23 Jane Swanson, followed by Cheryl Pahaham.

24 MS. SWANSON: Good evening. I am Jane  
25 Swanson. I am Chief of Staff to council member

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1 Jessica Lappin who could not be hear tonight and  
2 I would like to read her statement, if I might.

3 (Reading): "Commission Chair Romano,  
4 commissioners, I represent the current Council  
5 District 5, which includes the Upper East Side of  
6 Manhattan and Roosevelt Island. Everybody here  
7 tonight knows that redistricting is about much  
8 more than redrawing lines on a map. It's about  
9 protecting our city's diverse communities of  
10 interest and ensuring they have an effective  
11 voice in government.

12 "I believe the new Council District 5 meets  
13 these goals with one exception. Three blocks  
14 have been carved out in East 79th Street from  
15 Second Avenue to Lexington Avenue and East 80th  
16 and 81st Street from Third Avenue to Lexington  
17 Avenue. This area shares the same history of  
18 interest as the other parts of the 5th Council  
19 District, and I believe removing it would  
20 unnecessarily divide a united community.

21 "These three blocks have more in common with  
22 their neighbors to the east than they do to the  
23 west. The blocks east of Lexington Avenue have  
24 more commercial, retail and restaurant  
25 establishments than those to the west. The best

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1 way for the neighborhood to address the noise,  
2 traffic and sanitation issues of a commercial  
3 district is by speaking with one voice and  
4 receiving hands-on attention from their global  
5 council member.

6 "The glue that keeps the neighborhood  
7 together is the East 79th Street Neighborhood  
8 Association. For 28 years, this community group  
9 has provided a strong, unified voice for  
10 residents of East 79th Street and surrounding  
11 blocks. The New York Times has called its  
12 president and founder Betty Cooper Wallerstein  
13 'perhaps the City's most tenacious and effective  
14 community organizer.' You will hear from her  
15 next.

16 "This neighborhood association now includes  
17 over 40 blocks, including those on 79th, 80th and  
18 81st if the current map cuts out. In the 1990s,  
19 the organization fought against the  
20 establishments of big box stores on East 80th and  
21 81st Streets, between Second and Third Avenues,  
22 which would have brought loading docks and  
23 tractor-trailers to these mid-blocks.

24 "This group has also successfully fought  
25 inappropriate development projects, though at the

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1 same time coming up with reasonable alternatives  
2 that made good sense and can actually get build.  
3 Today, the 79th Street Neighborhood Association  
4 continues it grassroots advocacy on issues that  
5 matter to the Upper East Side and the entire  
6 city, transportation, sanitation, beautification,  
7 affordable housing and quality public schools.

8 "Keeping this community together would help  
9 ensure this group remains at the front line of  
10 community activism. Transportation issues also  
11 unify residents on and around East 79th Street.  
12 Second Avenue subway construction has been a huge  
13 challenge to the area. The noise, safety and  
14 environmental concerns that come with building  
15 the largest underground infrastructure project in  
16 the world are unique.

17 "Representing both the east and west side of  
18 Second Avenue has allowed Council Member Lappin  
19 and me to be strong voice for these residents --  
20 (timer dings) -- to get results, Like air-quality  
21 monitoring and promotions for effective  
22 businesses. The blocks of East 79th and the  
23 neighboring blocks of East 80th and 81st Streets  
24 should be in a district side by side with  
25 neighbors who share their concerns of interest.

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1 Thank you."

2 MR. HACKWORTH: We will next hear from  
3 Cheryl Pahaham, who had an earlier registration  
4 number, and then Betty Cooper Wallerstein.

5 MS. PAHAHAM: I request that the Commission  
6 revise its proposal from December 4th to merge  
7 much of the existing District 7 and 10 in  
8 Northern Manhattan. The Commission ought to  
9 propose a new map that includes alternative for  
10 Northern Manhattan, such as extending Council  
11 District 10 north into the Bronx and leaving the  
12 existing District 7 largely intact.

13 The commissioners received written and oral  
14 testimony from residents who rejected its  
15 proposals for Council Districts 7 and 10, yet the  
16 Commission chose not to reflect such testimony in  
17 its December 4th map. In fact, the only changes  
18 reflected in the December 4th map for  
19 Northern Manhattan came directly from the  
20 October 4th testimony of Northern Manhattan  
21 Council members. The Commission should be doing  
22 its work independently and not give deference to  
23 the preferences of individual Council members.

24 It is a violation of the New York City  
25 Charter Section 51(A) for Council members to

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1 direct this work which the charter assigns to the  
2 Commission. I believe that the December 4th map  
3 also violates the Voting Rights Act because it  
4 will reduce black and Latino representation in  
5 Manhattan.

6 The Existing district 7 is a proven  
7 coalition district with a decades-long pattern of  
8 whites voting for Latino and black candidates,  
9 and of black and Latinos supporting white  
10 candidates. District 7 as it is now configured  
11 exemplified the dream that inspired the Voting  
12 Rights Act. It is a district where a candidate  
13 of any race can credibly run and get elected.

14 I don't know why the Commission and our  
15 Northern Manhattan Council members seem so  
16 determined to destroy it. I urge the Commission  
17 to leave District 7 intact.

18 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
19 Betty Cooper Wallerstein, followed by Marian  
20 Rosenwasser-Jordan.

21 MS. WALLERSTEIN: Thank you very much for  
22 the opportunity of addressing you tonight. I'm  
23 gratified to hear the opening remarks by the  
24 chairman that the redistricting effort gives  
25 consideration to the neighborhood association's



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1 need to remain intact and to have continuity. As  
2 you heard, the East 79th Street is called a  
3 neighborhood association because we not only work  
4 with the improvement on 79th Street from the East  
5 River to 5th, but also with neighboring blocks.  
6 We are some 40 blocks over 28 years of working  
7 together with both of the 5th District and the  
8 other district west of that.

9 We have many projects under way in zoning,  
10 in beautification, in vendor issues that include  
11 the blocks that are being considered to be  
12 removed from the 5th District. Over the 28  
13 years, we have had different representatives from  
14 that district. But the history of working with  
15 the district, the work that we have done, that we  
16 have worked with, remains with that district.

17 And that history and that cooperation is a  
18 continuity that has enabled me, who started this  
19 organization, to still be working in it some 28  
20 years later. We are certainly fortunate to have  
21 two very, very good representatives for both of  
22 the parts of 79th Street, that which has  
23 historically been to Lexington, actually, and  
24 that part that was represented from Lexington to  
25 5th.

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1           But I do ask your consideration to keep  
2           those three blocks which we have been working  
3           very, very hard. We met every single month of  
4           the year over all this time. And we do work with  
5           the groups of buildings and blocks that are 79th  
6           Street from Second to Lexington and our projects  
7           include 80th and 81st Street, also from Second to  
8           Lexington.

9           Again, I thank you for the opportunity to  
10          request that you not change that district. Thank  
11          you so much.

12          MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
13          Marian Rosenwasser-Jordan, to be followed by the  
14          Honorable Council Woman Melissa Mark-Viverito.

15          MS. ROSENWASSER-JORDAN: Thank you. Good  
16          evening, all. My name is Marian  
17          Rosenwasser-Jordan. And first, I want to say  
18          that I do love my elected officials. And next, I  
19          have to express my incomprehension at a  
20          redistricting plan that splits a street down the  
21          middle between north and south, a side street  
22          where the north side of the street and the south  
23          side of the street belong to two different  
24          districts.

25          In addition to being a member of the 79th

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1 Street Neighborhood Association, I also am part  
2 of a steering committee. We have a single block  
3 association, East 80th between Second and Third,  
4 and we really are very active in taking care of  
5 our issues, our problems.

6 We have had recently and for a few years  
7 running, we had a major problem with a nursing  
8 home that's on the south side of the street which  
9 involved people on the north side also. We have  
10 ongoing problems with garbage and noise and rats.  
11 The rats don't know where their boundaries are.  
12 So, their homes, their underground homes are on  
13 both sides of the streets and they merge wherever  
14 they want, and this involves the entire street.

15 And in the past, we have been able to  
16 contact our local council member, when needed,  
17 and I ask you again, why a street, a side street,  
18 residential -- well, it doesn't matter whether  
19 it's residential or not, but why the side street  
20 is split down the middle where one side is in one  
21 district and the other side is in another  
22 district, because we are all involved in the same  
23 problems. Thank you very much for letting me  
24 testify.

25 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be the

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1 Honorable Council Woman Melissa Mark-Viverito, to  
2 be followed by Brian Paul.

3 MS. MARK-VIVERITO: Good evening, Commission  
4 members. I am Council Member Melissa  
5 Mark-Viverito. And again, as has been said  
6 before, déjà vu all over again. I would dare say  
7 similar to the October hearing, more likely than  
8 not, the people here today will overwhelmingly be  
9 seeking your presence because of their concerns  
10 regarding District 8, and to inspire faith and  
11 trust in a truly democratic and independent  
12 process.

13 The expectation is that the voice of the  
14 people will be heard in this process. I would  
15 hope that people can raise their hands in this  
16 room that are here with regards to District 8.  
17 So again, I want to thank you for opening up the  
18 process with regards to additional community  
19 input on these very important decisions that will  
20 obviously have an impact on the next decade.

21 As you remember, East Harlem came out in  
22 huge numbers, and the proposed District 8 lines  
23 have been the subject of numerous news article as  
24 well as criticism by good government groups and  
25 leaders of community-based organizations. It is

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1           unclear to me why this level of public outcry has  
2           been largely disregarded by the Commission which  
3           rushed to make changes to other districts, the  
4           Commission which rushed to make changes to other  
5           districts while leaving District 8 the same.

6           It is my hope and expectation that this  
7           additional round of hearings and revisions will  
8           allow for the earnest reconsideration of the  
9           proposed 8th District lines, particularly the  
10          Commission's mandate that a district be drawn  
11          evenly between Manhattan and the Bronx.

12          This hardline position leads to the  
13          indiscriminate splitting up of a historic  
14          community of interest, in El Barrio, East Harlem,  
15          and the illogical removal of Randall's Island and  
16          Wards Island from the 8th District. As I have  
17          stated consistently, I more than welcome the  
18          opportunity to represent more of the Bronx.  
19          However, this cannot come at the complete expense  
20          of East Harlem's historical integrity and unity.

21          So, I will provide detailed testimony, but I  
22          want to just mention some pre-concerns. If this  
23          is creating a district that is at least  
24          50 percent of the Bronx at the exclusion of all  
25          the concerns of protecting communities of

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1 interest, it is arbitrary and without basis under  
2 the charter. I urge the Commission to reverse  
3 this position and allow for the full restoration  
4 of the East Harlem boundary as delineated by the  
5 proposal.

6 Among the most critical area that need to be  
7 added back into the district are the portions of  
8 NYCHA Carver Houses and Lexington Houses  
9 Development. I outlined in my written testimony  
10 Randall's Island and Wards Island. Again, we  
11 want it included in District 8. But the concern  
12 that I have is that you will continue to chop up  
13 East Harlem in order to accommodate bringing back  
14 of Randall's Island and Wards Island, and that is  
15 not acceptable.

16 Randall's Island and Wards Island is to be  
17 brought back into District 8. It should not be  
18 by removing more blocks out of East Harlem.  
19 That's not acceptable at all (timer dings).

20 Also, the removal of Central Park from  
21 District 8, again I have urged that you not do  
22 that. I think that while I understand there are  
23 concerns about the compactness of the proposed  
24 district, given that no one lives in the park,  
25 this does not seem to be a pressing concern.

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1           What is problematic is shifting this vital  
2           parkland from a largely working class and poor  
3           district to wealthier communities on the Upper  
4           East Side or Upper West Side.

5           So again, I want to thank you for your  
6           consideration here and for opening up this second  
7           round of hearings. But again, I really believe  
8           that the vast majority much of people that have  
9           participated in these public hearings have spoken  
10          up around District 8. And I really, really hope  
11          that you seriously take that into account. Thank  
12          you.

13          MR. HACKWORTH: All right. We are ready for  
14          our next speaker. Our next speaker will be Brian  
15          Paul, followed by the Honorable Council Member  
16          Gale Brewer.

17          MR. PAUL: My name is Brian Paul and I am  
18          research and policy coordinator at Common Cause  
19          New York. Thank you for the opportunity to  
20          testify again in the City Council redistricting  
21          today. Sorry, I have to bend down to the mic,  
22          but I will do it. No worries. There we go.

23          So, before getting to the plan, I would just  
24          like to thank the Commission for the decision to  
25          hold a third round. This offers additional

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1 scrutiny which is always good for any proposals.  
2 And also, the Commission has done a good job in  
3 posting all of its documents on the website and  
4 that should be recognized.

5 But we agree with Citizens Union that felt  
6 explanations written of the rationale for  
7 districts would be helpful. The Commission  
8 director makes a preparation of this nature at  
9 the final meeting, but this would be good to have  
10 in writing beforehand. And we also agree with  
11 Minkwon that the public should have an  
12 opportunity to comment at that final meeting,  
13 even if there is not going to be another draft.

14 Moving on to the plan, when we were at our  
15 Manhattan hearing in October, we heard three  
16 major issues raised by the testifiers. And the  
17 first was the division of Washington Heights  
18 between 10 and 7 in that draft. The second was  
19 the division of Manhattan Valley between 7 and 9,  
20 and the third was the District 8 issue in which  
21 many blocks are removed from East Harlem along  
22 are Randall's Island.

23 This next plan that really only addresses  
24 one, the Washington Heights issue. In this  
25 testimony, we have attached a plan that



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1 demonstrates how all three of these issues can be  
2 solved without making really a major changes to  
3 the plan just by shifting lines around slightly.  
4 The Manhattan Valley district can be moved  
5 entirely into Number 7, like somebody testified  
6 earlier. And this can be done without reducing  
7 the Hispanic share of that district. Just swap a  
8 section of Harlem around 145th Street.

9 District 8, as we presented on October 4th,  
10 it is quite possible to keep that district's  
11 current East Harlem borders. Keep Randall's  
12 Island in. Also, while increasing the Bronx  
13 share and the Hispanic share of that district  
14 almost 60 percent. We don't think there is any  
15 legal or demographic reason not to heed the  
16 public's call on this.

17 It's also important to point out in this  
18 current draft, three NYCHA developments in East  
19 Harlem are split, the Taft, Carver and Lexington  
20 Houses. And it seems like the Commission has  
21 made careful efforts throughout the rest of the  
22 plan to avoid dividing NYCHA houses, and there is  
23 no reason why this should not also be done in  
24 East Harlem.

25 If you look at Brooklyn Districts 36 and

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1           41 -- (timer dings) -- they very carefully don't  
2           divide NYCHA. And these changes can be made  
3           improving the lines in the Bronx as well and  
4           creating a balance between Bronx and Manhattan  
5           districts, as others have testified here today.  
6           And I will wrap it up there. Thank you for the  
7           opportunity to testify.

8                   MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
9           Honorable Councilwoman Gale Brewer, followed by  
10          Kathleen Benson.

11                   MS. BREWER: Thank you very much. I am Gale  
12          Brewer and I represent the 6th Council District,  
13          which right now goes at a perfect rectangle from  
14          54th Street to 96th Street, Central Park to the  
15          river. I wish it could stay like that. But it  
16          is my opinion that district lines should not  
17          dissect traditional neighborhoods. I think you  
18          heard that earlier.

19                   Neighborhoods in New York City have distinct  
20          personalities, and to the greatest extent  
21          possible, these neighborhoods should be elected  
22          officials who are familiar with unique  
23          neighborhood issues. There has been much  
24          discussion about how best to define communities  
25          of interest throughout this discussion of

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1           redistricting.

2           But for me, at least in this case, it is  
3           simple. Neighborhoods in New York are unique.  
4           West Siders, Harlemites, East Harlemites, East  
5           Siders, Villagers, we are all different. And  
6           while there are certainly great people and great  
7           elected officials from all over the city, I  
8           believe strongly that only one from the East  
9           Side, West Side, Harlem, East Harlem can truly  
10          understand those issues. And the same applies  
11          for all neighborhoods.

12          The Upper West Side is a distinct place and  
13          community its own social and political history,  
14          its own landmarks, gathering places, et cetera,  
15          and everyone knows where it is. It is demarked  
16          as it should be. It is not an artificial  
17          construct created by a committee or some  
18          arbitrary lines on a map. It's an actual place,  
19          just like any other neighborhood, with recognized  
20          physical boundaries.

21          I would like to turn to the districting map  
22          that was approved by the Commission on  
23          November 15, 2012. And I sent a letter to the  
24          New York City speaker after that because I was  
25          very upset about the proposed borders at the

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1 southern portion of Council District 6. For  
2 example, the proposed borders removed the Harbor  
3 View Terrace NYCHA development on West 55th  
4 Street from District 6. And the Harbor View  
5 Terrace NYCHA development is managed by Amsterdam  
6 Houses which is located in District 6. And  
7 splitting these sites between two districts make  
8 no sense.

9 And I have also received complaints from  
10 residents of West End Avenue between 57th and  
11 61st Streets who were upset that they were drawn  
12 out of District 6 because they have to contend  
13 with the new Extell development which is right  
14 across the street. It's a huge development. It  
15 is a new city, thousands of units. And they want  
16 to be able to be in the same district. But if  
17 there are challenges or discussions, it can be  
18 done on the same platform.

19 I want to thank the Districting Commission  
20 and Speaker Quinn for withdrawing its proposal to  
21 the Council in order to seek more public input.  
22 I think we all agree with that on these lines. I  
23 want to thank the Commission for its agreement to  
24 do so. It is a difficult process, but there will  
25 always be people who are unhappy with the way

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1 borders are drawn. It is most important to have  
2 as many discussions and rounds of public hearings  
3 as necessary because -- (timer dings) -- only  
4 sunshine gives people the opportunity to weigh  
5 in.

6 Finally, I want to say that as long as  
7 Harbor View Terrace is in, the West End Avenue  
8 buildings that I described are part of  
9 District 6. I want to thank you very much. And  
10 most importantly, thank you for this opportunity  
11 to speak because this hearing is absolutely  
12 necessary for everyone to be able to discuss what  
13 their concerns are. Thank you very much.

14 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kathleen  
15 Benson, to be followed by Les La Rue.

16 MS. BENSON: Thank you. I am here to  
17 address concerns about the proposed boundaries of  
18 District 8, two specific concerns to begin with.  
19 The first change is the proposed southern  
20 boundary of District 8, which fails to recognize  
21 that 96th Street is the gateway to East Harlem.  
22 The redrawn line either split or cut off entirely  
23 large NYCHA developments. Since East Harlem has  
24 the highest concentration of public housing in  
25 New York City, the tenants in those two

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1 developments, or three, would be best served if  
2 represented by a council person whose  
3 constituency is so heavily weighted to public  
4 housing.

5 I also ask the Commission to rethink the  
6 jagged nature of the western portion of the  
7 district between East 118th and 125th Streets and  
8 between Park and Lexington Avenues and in one  
9 case all the way over to Third Avenue. The  
10 cutouts on the current proposed map remind me of  
11 teeth carved in a Halloween jack-o-lantern.  
12 There is no integrity to that portion of District  
13 8 at all.

14 The people on the north side of the street  
15 will be represented -- should be represented by  
16 the same council person as the people on south  
17 side of the street. And speaking of integrity, I  
18 don't know. I was feeling kind of as if there  
19 was no point in just addressing the issue of the  
20 whole of East Harlem together. It is a community  
21 of interest. It's a proud community. It may be  
22 impoverished and have high incidents of disease,  
23 but it's not impoverished in spirit. And you  
24 have decimated it. It's as if it doesn't exist  
25 anymore.

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be Les  
2 La Rue, followed by Molly Blayney.

3 MR. LA RUE: Hello, my name is Les La Rue  
4 and I have been a resident of East Harlem for  
5 seven and a half years. I am testifying tonight  
6 in support of reestablishing the reposed  
7 District 8 lines to include the full portion of  
8 East Harlem that comprised the previous map.

9 While the restoration of La Marqueta to the  
10 revised proposal was a positive gesture, the maps  
11 still excludes over 30 blocks from a  
12 clearly-established and unified community. The  
13 new boundary extends much farther into the Bronx  
14 than could possibly be viewed as a preservation  
15 on community integrity.

16 What is the reason for reshaping District 8  
17 into a 50 percent Bronx district? The new  
18 district lines have been drawn in jutting,  
19 angular shapes with no regards for such  
20 common-sense realities as the natural cohesion of  
21 individual housing developments. How does the  
22 Commission justify the weird carving up the  
23 historically- and culturally-allied community of  
24 East Harlem to accommodate the heavy Bronx  
25 addition?

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1           It suggests a deliberate calculation to  
2           weaken the collective voice of East Harlem  
3           residents and service to an inflated Bronx voice.  
4           The fact that these could be conflicting voices  
5           on many issues, particularly that of council  
6           representation, is evidence enough that the  
7           proposed lines in no way honor the Commission's  
8           charge to maintain district unity.

9           The marginalization of East Harlem as a  
10          voting block could be construed as an absolutely  
11          unacceptable political maneuver intended to  
12          thwart the reelection of our council member,  
13          Melissa Mark-Viverito, the very possibility of  
14          which warrants a reevaluation of the  
15          decision-making process.

16          As a non-Latino resident of East Harlem, I  
17          can't speak to the inherent Latino solidarity and  
18          cultural pride embodied by our neighborhood with  
19          the same level of personality investment of many  
20          of my neighbors. But I am most definitely able  
21          to share their outrage as a process that appears  
22          rigged to disenfranchise this community.

23          Regarding the removal of Randall's Island  
24          from District 8, there doesn't seem to be a  
25          clearly justifiable reason for it. The island is



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1 physically connected to East Harlem via the  
2 bridge on the East River esplanade. It's  
3 literally within walking distance. It also  
4 shares a community board with our district. To  
5 this regard, these fixed ties is again in seeming  
6 conflict with the stated intent of redistricting.  
7 I urge the Commission to consider the map  
8 proposed by Common Cause as a viable alternative.  
9 Thank you.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Molly  
11 Blayney, to be followed by Jessie Daniels.

12 MS. BLAYNEY: Commissioner Chairman Romano  
13 and commissioners, I am Molly Blayney. I am  
14 speaking to you as a resident of Council Member  
15 Jessica Lappin's District 5. And while my words  
16 and opinions are my own and not the opinions of  
17 the group to which I belong, I am a member of  
18 East 79th Street Neighborhood Association. I  
19 serve on Community Board 8. And more to the  
20 point of this discussion, I am a member of the  
21 senior advisory group created by borough  
22 president Scott Stringer.

23 According to census data from the most  
24 recent American community survey, the Upper East  
25 Side has the Manhattan's highest percentage of

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1 residents, over 49,000 people. Our best  
2 calculations suggest that District 5 is home to  
3 approximately 38,000 residents over the age of  
4 65.

5 At first blush, this small patch of  
6 Manhattan's three blocks of Upper East Side seems  
7 insignificant, yet it clearly represents a great  
8 number of older adults who have lived in  
9 District 5 for decades. While we know that older  
10 adults are often more engaged in community  
11 involvement and political affairs, residential  
12 stability, meaning continuity within other  
13 neighborhoods, secures the communal motivation.

14 Further redistricting poses questions.  
15 Older adults have seen unhappy results of this  
16 process throughout their lifetimes. Although in  
17 this case, right here, this isn't the case -- I'm  
18 sorry, right here. They sometimes associate such  
19 change, however, with political maneuvering.  
20 Trust is important. Continuity is important.  
21 Clarity is important to keep our long term  
22 community ties in place. I urge you to keep  
23 these three blocks part of the powerful voice of  
24 District 5. Thank you.

25 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Jessie

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1 Daniels, to be followed by Glory Ann Kerstein.

2 MS. DANIELS: Hi, my name is Jessie Daniels  
3 and I am a CUNY professor at both Hunter College  
4 and Silberman Campus at the Graduate Center. I  
5 am entering my testimony against the proposed  
6 redrawing of District 8 as someone who both works  
7 and lives in East Harlem and as a scholar who  
8 studied racial inequality for nearly 20 years.

9 I am strongly opposed to the Commission's  
10 proposal to change the boundaries of District 8.  
11 The proposed changes violate the intent and  
12 explicit mandate of the City charter to not  
13 divide communities of interest. The neighborhood  
14 of East Harlem, as so many of my fellow citizens  
15 have spoken, contained within the current  
16 boundaries of District 8 clearly constitutes a  
17 community of interest as described in the City  
18 charter.

19 The designation in the charter to keep  
20 communities of interest, particularly those that  
21 share racial or ethnic ties, is written in  
22 accordance with the Voting Rights Act, part of  
23 historic and hard-won civil rights legislation.  
24 Indeed, East Harlem has one of the highest  
25 concentrations of Latino voters, residents from

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1 Puerto Rica, Dominican Republic, Mexico and  
2 Central America.

3 District 8 has been well represented by  
4 Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, the first  
5 Puerto Rico woman and Latina elected to serve as  
6 council member. The effort by this Commission, a  
7 Commission I will just point out with a majority  
8 of members appointed by Speaker Chris Quinn and  
9 Mayor Bloomberg, to split the District 8 and this  
10 community of interest just prior to the next  
11 mayoral election is a pernicious and cunning  
12 political move intended to boost Speaker Quinn's  
13 chances of becoming mayor.

14 Such politically motivated redistricting  
15 contributes to the destruction of the East Harlem  
16 community by attempting to divide the Latino  
17 vote. If the Commission does divide District 8  
18 as proposed, they will do egregious harm to the  
19 community of interest that is East Harlem and  
20 they will be in violation of the City charter.

21 Moreover, as a scholar of racial inequality,  
22 I can tell you that such a move will put both  
23 this Commission and the speaker on the wrong side  
24 of history and the wrong side of racial justice.  
25 People writing about this period will place the

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1 Commission and the speaker in the annals of  
2 history next to the White Citizens Council, and  
3 no amount of support for the gay marriage on the  
4 part of Speaker Quinn will erase that.

5 Therefore, I ask the Commission to fully  
6 restore the originally boundaries of District 8  
7 and keep the East Harlem community intact. Thank  
8 you very much for your time.

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Glory  
10 Ann Kerstein, to be followed by the Honorable  
11 Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez.

12 MS. KERSTEIN: I am Glory Ann Kerstein. I  
13 am president of DEBNA, the Duke Ellington  
14 Boulevard Neighborhood Association, which is West  
15 106th Street in Manhattan Valley, a very distinct  
16 and unique community of about 50 square blocks on  
17 the Upper West Side. And I emphasize the  
18 uniqueness because I want to share with today's  
19 Commission members two adages that I am sure you  
20 all find wise which is, if it ain't broke, don't  
21 fix it, number one, and number two, two wrongs  
22 don't make a right.

23 We in Manhattan Valley were heartsick to see  
24 the last proposal from the Commission that once  
25 again split Manhattan Valley, a small community

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1 of about 50 square blocks. For such a small  
2 community to get this kind of split, basically  
3 obliterates our power of electoral voice, no  
4 matter what situation we find ourselves in. So,  
5 that's one wrong.

6 The second wrong is the fact that we are now  
7 pulled out of Ms. Mark-Viverito's district who  
8 has served us ably and well for eight years and  
9 has been protective of us, and now we are being  
10 appended to two Harlem council districts who have  
11 absolutely no knowledge of what Manhattan Valley  
12 is, what our struggles have been, the crack wars  
13 that we participated in the '90s and the early  
14 2000s. We have no name recollection with them.

15 DEBNA itself is part of the West Side  
16 Chamber of Commerce, West Side Federation Block  
17 Association. We worked with Community Board 7  
18 and 24th Precinct, all south of 110th Street. We  
19 have no name recognition, no rapport with these  
20 Harlem districts. We will be swallowed up and  
21 obliterated. In the last census, the two census  
22 tracts for Manhattan Valley had a 45 percent  
23 Latino presence. You are splitting us up now.

24 How does that underwrite the imperative of  
25 the Voting Rights Act you are supposed to protect

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1 minority people, number one, and number two, keep  
2 communities intact. We are left flabbergasted  
3 and heartsick that you have continued to split  
4 Manhattan Valley up such that we will no longer  
5 exist as an intact entity. We ask you to please  
6 reconsider. Two wrongs don't make a right. Do  
7 the right thing. Keep Manhattan Valley and allow  
8 us the right to vote for council member who has  
9 represented us so ably, Council Member Melissa  
10 Mark-Viverito. Thank you.

11 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is the  
12 Honorable Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, to be  
13 followed by Monique Ndgo Washington.

14 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. First of all, I  
15 would like to say that on December 4th when the  
16 final map was released, I called publicly, I  
17 believe through New York One, and also members of  
18 this committee to please allow the public to give  
19 their feedback on that line. And I hope that  
20 there is something that we should learn from this  
21 process.

22 And I believe that the night when the last  
23 line will be released public should have an  
24 opportunity to also give the feedback before the  
25 members take a vote. There is no doubt that

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1 those of us who are parents have a big  
2 responsibility on being a role model to our  
3 children about democracy. So, if we criticize  
4 other countries because we say that we live in a  
5 more democratic country, what are we telling  
6 other countries? When here, in this city, we  
7 hijack a process?

8 A process where average New Yorkers is  
9 limited in the input? Understand, this is what  
10 we have and we had to work with what we have.  
11 But that is a lot to do. And I know that many of  
12 you had dedicated your life serving our city, and  
13 I hope that in this process, we definitely listen  
14 to the public.

15 And what we are saying is, let's keep  
16 communities of interest together. This is not  
17 about Washington Heights. You know what? I  
18 believe in the work that I have been doing and I  
19 will be reelected regardless of the line that you  
20 create for my district. This is about our city.  
21 This is about a community that has been split,  
22 that have been divided and a resident of El  
23 Barrio tonight.

24 And in solidarity of my colleague of  
25 district council, Council 8, my colleague Melissa



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1 Mark-Viverito. This work, we can do it. We can  
2 work with our colleagues in El Barrio and find a  
3 way of how we keep that community together.  
4 Again, this is not about 10, 7, 8 or 9. This is  
5 all about when we go to sleep tonight, if  
6 tonight's our last second of our life, can we  
7 rest in peace?

8 Are we going to say to the God that we  
9 believe that we really keep the democratic values  
10 that we say that represent the more democratic  
11 nation of the world? So, let's work together.  
12 Let's make the best light as possible and let's  
13 listen to everyone -- (timer dings) -- especially  
14 to the residents of El Barrio. Thank you.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Monique  
16 Ndgo Washington, to be followed by Esmeralda  
17 Simmons.

18 MS. WASHINGTON: Good evening, members of  
19 the New York Districting Commission. My name is  
20 Monique Ndgo Washington. I testified on  
21 October 4th regarding the proposed preliminary  
22 maps. I highlighted the fact that my block was  
23 mysteriously drawn out of District 7 as the  
24 eastern boundary traveled down 141st Street and  
25 Saint Nicholas Avenue.

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1           Instead of cutting across the Convent Avenue  
2           at 127th Street where the block ends, the line  
3           cuts across 128th Street which is not a regular  
4           block, but instead an alley known by the  
5           residents as Deadman's Hill. So, when the  
6           revised map was released, you altered the map and  
7           now the boundary runs down Convent Avenue.

8           This action coupled with other map changes  
9           clearly shows that you do not make decisions  
10          meeting guidelines of the City charter to  
11          maintain community ties and consider the voting  
12          demographics of the population. You are merely a  
13          pawn and given a task, appointed to carry out the  
14          wishes of the political machine and draw lines  
15          that favor placing individuals in the district  
16          that want to run for City Council seats or remove  
17          candidates that may be considered a threat.

18          I along with Julius Dean have been drawn out  
19          of District 7 and placed in District 9. At the  
20          stroke of a pen or the click of a mouse, you make  
21          decisions that cause harm and have a negative  
22          impact on the future of our communities. As the  
23          president of the Terrace Apartments Tenant  
24          Association and founder of Take Back Our City, we  
25          will organize and educate New York City residents

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1 by the governing structure and work with other  
2 tenant block associations, parents, low-wage  
3 workers to take back our city come 2013.

4 We will educate New York City about the  
5 governing structure with the hopes that they will  
6 get involved in local politics. Our position,  
7 one of them is to grant the power to recall our  
8 Citywide elected officials. This will make them  
9 accountable to us, the citizens of New York City.

10 We are willing to work with any group  
11 willing to fight to shift the power to the people  
12 beyond 2013. We have a voice and we matter.  
13 You, the Districting Commission, do not get the  
14 last word. We, the voters do. Thank you.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
16 Esmeralda Simmons, to be followed by Peggy  
17 Morales.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Good evening, members of the  
19 Districting Commission and staff. My name is  
20 Esmeralda Simmons. I am the executive director  
21 of the Center for Law and Social Justice. The  
22 Center is it a unit of Medgar Evers College and  
23 has for over 26 years been a voting rights  
24 advocate in New York City.

25 We have many comments, so we are going to

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1 divide our comments over the hearing process.  
2 But I want to start by talking about perhaps the  
3 core issue that people are addressing today,  
4 outside of the problems in the Manhattan map, and  
5 that is the process of redistricting.

6 The Center for Law and Social Justice Unity  
7 Plan allies and other good government groups like  
8 Common Cause, strongly criticized the Commission  
9 in November of last year for not allowing public  
10 comment on its revised plan. Rather, the  
11 Commission chose to vote on that plan without  
12 allowing for any citizen or resident voice. It  
13 just forwarded that plan to the City Council.

14 However, due to the public outcry -- you  
15 need to take credit -- due to the public outcry  
16 and some questionable district drafts, the  
17 Commission side-stepped that process. Indeed,  
18 the public hearings we are having now that were  
19 suggested by the public, we are glad that you  
20 have decided to have the hearings we demanded.

21 First, the Center urges the New York City  
22 Districting Commission to follow the charter. We  
23 believe that the process of redistricting is as  
24 basic to democracy and that the process is as  
25 important as the product. The process is as

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1 important as the maps. The process of  
2 redistricting the City Council should be  
3 completely open and transparent. We make the  
4 following suggestions.

5 First, we urge the Districting Commission to  
6 follow the City charter and mandating its  
7 priority in drawing districts. While it should  
8 appear obvious, those legal criteria trump  
9 political considerations and provide cover to the  
10 Commission when political objections are raised.

11 If the charter wanted the City Council and  
12 the mayor to draw the city lines, it would have  
13 provided so, rather than creating an appointed,  
14 independent body, you, the Districting  
15 Commission, to handle this task.

16 Second, the Center urges the Commission to  
17 take the comments of the many New Yorkers who  
18 will testify seriously. This is not just an  
19 exercise. New Yorkers do indeed know their  
20 communities the best. While every districting  
21 recommendation cannot be incorporated -- (timer  
22 dings) -- into the Commission's plan, many can  
23 and should be.

24 Finally, the Center urges the Commission to  
25 complete the redistricting process in a timely

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1 fashion. We know you had Hurricane Sandy. We  
2 know the Commission was appointed late. However,  
3 the petitioning process will start on time. The  
4 Justice Department may still take 60 days.

5 We know you are under time constraint. Do  
6 the best you can to move this process along.  
7 However, allow citizens, allow residents to speak  
8 to you after you reveal that plan. You may have  
9 some changes to make. Thank you.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Peggy  
11 Morales, to be followed by Chaplain Michelle  
12 Nieves.

13 MS. MORALES: Good evening. My name is  
14 Peggy Morales and I am the district leader for  
15 the 68th Assembly District. I am also State  
16 Committee Woman and I am here to testify before  
17 this Commission. This would be my second time  
18 testifying about this matter. And I am just  
19 going to read from what I have written here.

20 Fact, the radical change proposed by the  
21 Districting Commission endangers communities of  
22 interest in the 8th Council District.

23 Fact, Common Cause has proposed a map that  
24 acknowledges growth in the Bronx while continuing  
25 to preserve East Harlem boundaries.

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1 Fact, the redistricting process is supposed  
2 to be a community-driven process. To date, very  
3 little weight has been given to the East Harlem  
4 community's clear request that it not be  
5 parcelled out to accommodate anyone's future  
6 political agenda.

7 Fact, throughout the process, the  
8 Redistricting Commission is charged with  
9 supporting communities of interest as outlined  
10 under the City charter.

11 Fact, there is nothing in the charter that  
12 allows for the consideration of a borough's  
13 representation and the Commission's insistence on  
14 giving such consideration to the Bronx has  
15 created a proposal that defies at least four  
16 specific criteria under Section 52 of the City  
17 charter.

18 Fact, based on census numbers, each district  
19 should be 160,000 people. This number can  
20 deviate above or below by 5 percent. Under the  
21 current proposal, the 17th District, which  
22 borders on the north boundary, is under  
23 4.94 percent, and the 16th District is also under  
24 by 3.38 percent.

25 So, my question to your Districting

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1 Commission is, with that in mind, what logical  
2 reason would the Redistricting Commission have to  
3 increase the 8th District to 4.99 percent instead  
4 of simply growing the 16th and 17th Districts by  
5 3.38 percent and 4.94 percent respectively,  
6 thereby allowing East Harlem to retain most of  
7 its original East Harlem district? Thank you.

8 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Chaplain  
9 Michelle Nieves, to be followed by --

10 MS. NIEVES: Reconstructing Harlem.

11 MR. HACKWORTH: -- to be followed by Timothy  
12 Harrell.

13 MS. NIEVES: My name is Michelle Nieves. I  
14 am with the community program with the Adam  
15 Clayton Powell State Building. My organization  
16 is People United for the Healing of Our  
17 Communities. I am the COE along with Pastor  
18 Linda Matthews. Greetings and Happy New Year's.

19 What? They want to rebuild in some  
20 districts in Harlem cutting into neighborhoods  
21 and we don't know if another district leader is  
22 capable of running our neighborhoods? Because  
23 Keith Wright, the Assembly District 70 leader,  
24 represents Harlem and the people of Harlem. We  
25 don't need the change. Keith has been serving



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1 the District 70 since 1992. He is also a  
2 resident. He is very compassionate about the  
3 needs of our community.

4 We are not going to accept an elected  
5 official to come into his space that we know  
6 nothing about and has no idea how to serve our  
7 community. Together we stand and divided we  
8 fall. Then, on the other hand, and very highly  
9 favored is our senator, Bill Perkins of Districts  
10 7 and 9. He knows how to help a district grow.  
11 And he is strong and stable and he believes in  
12 change, but for the benefit of the community  
13 coming together for unity and growth within our  
14 districts in Harlem.

15 By changing, rebuilding and cutting into our  
16 district, this will cause division, confusion,  
17 disaster, destruction, and our community life.  
18 Bad enough God's storm did a lot of  
19 reconstructing, like Storm Sandy. Instead of  
20 breaking down our communities, why don't you guys  
21 take that money and some of our taxes and help  
22 build those communities that are very badly  
23 destroyed?

24 The Declaration of Independence says all men  
25 are created equal and we the people are demanding

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1           that our rights be respected, also that Martin  
2           Luther King's name be put back on Harlem Hospital  
3           like it was, as our civil rights leader, who left  
4           us a reminder of the freedom that was won.

5           We the people, the disabled, school  
6           students, the teachers, the artists, the vendors,  
7           the community, the residents, organizations in  
8           the communities, the churches and the districts,  
9           children in the playgrounds, the day cares, the  
10          hospitals, the families and the families in the  
11          hospitals and the families who visit them, the  
12          nursing homes and the families who visit them and  
13          all of our leaders who build these communities, I  
14          am one of the voices that speaks for them.

15          God bless you, and I hope you all terminate  
16          your decision to reconstruct. God bless you.

17          MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
18          Timothy Harrell, to be followed by Raul Reyes.  
19          All right, Raul Reyes.

20          MR. REYES: Good evening, distinguished  
21          members of the Commission. I am here on behalf  
22          of the Democratic Club, the oldest Puerto Rican  
23          Democratic Club in the United States, founded  
24          over 60 years ago. In my life of politics over  
25          45 years in East Harlem, I have never witnessed

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1 an assault into East Harlem such as the last few  
2 years. From the district was divided in such a  
3 way that we have a senator from the Bronx and a  
4 senator from Central Harlem.

5 The congressional district was divided in  
6 such a way that now we go to Washington Heights  
7 and to the Bronx. And now you want to do the  
8 same thing with the councilman district. I don't  
9 know who is calling the shots on your Commission,  
10 but I am sure you will do the best that you are  
11 told to do.

12 I am sure that any common person would not  
13 divide a community. Carver Houses, they have  
14 taking away six buildings away from District 8.  
15 Lexington Houses, they are taking two buildings  
16 away. Now you are putting them in a district  
17 before and then you have part of district coming  
18 to East Harlem. And now you are putting  
19 50 percent of the Bronx into East Harlem.

20 Do you think that's right? We are the only  
21 district across the river. I am sure the members  
22 of the Commission from the Bronx and the members  
23 the Commission from Manhattan can look into that.  
24 You know what I am talking about. And you should  
25 stand up for what is right. It's right to keep

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1 East Harlem intact. Keep East Harlem together.

2 Again, for over 45 years, I never seen a  
3 political into our community and I don't know how  
4 you did distinguished members of this Commission,  
5 allowing not only being used to sort a community.  
6 Now, I was telling a few colleagues of mine a few  
7 weeks ago, it would not happen. And I was told  
8 it was a lie. If the Honorable (unintelligible)  
9 was alive, it would not happen. He would not  
10 allow what was being put in the street, telling  
11 what to do, they would not allow to happen.

12 And guess what? We the people are solid,  
13 are keeping our eyes and our ears open, and it  
14 will make a difference in the polls. Thank you.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
16 Susan Rodriguez, to be followed by -- and I am  
17 having trouble reading the handwriting here,  
18 Gevosd Dominacn.

19 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hi, good evening. Thank you  
20 for the opportunity to speak at this testimony.  
21 I am a resident of Melissa Mark-Viverito's  
22 district in District 8 in East Harlem. And I  
23 also have an organization called SMARTS,  
24 Sisterhood Mobilized for AIDS, HIV Research and  
25 Treatment, which was started in East Harlem in

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1 1998. And we are located in East Harlem on Park  
2 Avenue between 121st and 122nd.

3 And I am not even sure if, because I have  
4 seen different maps, I don't even think what the  
5 current map, we will still be in her district.  
6 And that does concern me. And I just want to say  
7 that I was trying to explain to my 19-year-old  
8 son who is here from college what this whole  
9 thing is about. And he said, "Mommy, you know,  
10 government is so shady."

11 And you know, I couldn't even explain to him  
12 what was going on. And he just couldn't  
13 understand why half of -- 50 percent of the Bronx  
14 is now part of this district, and Randall's and  
15 Wards Island, which I go to every day, I go over  
16 the footbridge every day on 102nd Street to walk  
17 my dogs over there -- why that would become part  
18 of Queens?

19 I mean, and I know that Randall's and Wards  
20 Island has been part of East Harlem for decades.  
21 My late husband, he and his family are from East  
22 Harlem Wagner Projects. That is where they would  
23 go when they were kids in the '60s and '70s. And  
24 I just don't even understand why that would be  
25 turned into part of Queens. I mean, to get over

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1 to the island, you have the RFK Bridge. You have  
2 the footbridge in East Harlem. The bus that goes  
3 there comes from East Harlem. So, why would that  
4 become part of Queens?

5 As Melissa said before, we don't want to  
6 have that part of District 8 at the expense of  
7 East Harlem. What we would like to happen is,  
8 like in the Bronx, which I have to say, the last  
9 time I was there, I had a GPS and I got lost.  
10 So, I don't even understand why we would be more  
11 into the Bronx.

12 So, thank you. I appreciate the time that  
13 you are allowing us to, you know, voice our  
14 concerns. But please, leave East Harlem alone.  
15 Like, you know, it really needs to stay.

16 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Gevosd  
17 Dominacn, to be followed by Ruben Dario Vargas.

18 MR. DOMINACN: That's okay. I can't read my  
19 handwriting, either. I came to address the  
20 Commission in support of a unified, new  
21 District 10, which comprises Inwood, Upper  
22 Manhattan and Washington Heights. When I first  
23 moved up there 25 years ago, I moved up for the  
24 diversity. And once I got up there, it became  
25 split. It doesn't look like it follows the

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1 Voters Rights Act. It looks like it's  
2 segregated, completely distinct communities on  
3 one side and the other, but they all share the  
4 same common values, interests and geography.

5 We basically have a family-oriented, middle  
6 class -- one side is lower middle class and the  
7 other side is middle class, and that's the way it  
8 goes. We heard from Ms. Pahaham tonight who had  
9 organized on June 4th a meeting at Inwood Center,  
10 to which Mr. Ettricks came. And basically she  
11 represented it on the poster of the community  
12 meeting to give your input on the issue.

13 However, when we got there, it turned out to  
14 be a one-sided debate from her to Mr. Ettricks,  
15 and she tried to exclude any other input that  
16 went into the process that was on the agenda that  
17 night, which is indicative of what happens  
18 uptown. Everything gets manipulated, which  
19 resulted in Districts 7 and 10, which affected  
20 the representation.

21 We have a constant cast of characters who  
22 run interference for each other or back off or  
23 even cross boundaries and put their input into  
24 whatever goes on on the other side, depending on  
25 what the issue is and whom it affects and who

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1 isn't looking at the time. So, a lot of people  
2 up there don't even know who their councilman is.

3 We have people constantly jumping across  
4 from 70 to 10 giving their input and trying to  
5 call the shots from the other side of the fence  
6 which shouldn't even be there in the first place.  
7 In closing, it's about time that this huge  
8 malignancy got put together and make a community  
9 back together, that has been torn apart by  
10 internal politics and corruption on the community  
11 board, which, it's hard to explain, because you  
12 have to get into an investigation on how things  
13 like that occur.

14 But take my word for it. Too much goes on  
15 behind closed doors. The cast of characters  
16 always changes. People are misinformed and  
17 people are not informed at all as to what goes on  
18 and how it goes on and how it comes about. It's  
19 basically behind all closed doors (timer dings).  
20 And that's pretty much it. I thank you for your  
21 time and please keep your sights on Inwood and  
22 Washington Heights being unified into a new  
23 District Council 10. We would really appreciate  
24 it. And I represent nobody except myself.

25 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be



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1 Ruben Dario Vargas, to be followed by Timothy  
2 Harrell.

3 MR. VARGAS: Thank you, distinguished  
4 Commissioners. My name is Ruben Dario Vargas. I  
5 am a representative of the United Democratic  
6 Organization. We are an organization who, our  
7 mission statement is, we do politic. We make  
8 politicians. We vigorously reinforce the  
9 American democratic process by helping anyone who  
10 wants to get elected to get involved in the  
11 political process helping them to get elected.

12 Coming to our district line, part of the  
13 organization represented by Ruben Dario Vargas,  
14 understand having read the Civil Rights Act of  
15 1965, having read the City charter of the City of  
16 New York, understanding that the community of  
17 interest must be kept together, have concluded  
18 that the current proposed line cannot be better  
19 than what have been done.

20 People don't want to understand that  
21 everybody cannot be pleased. You cannot have all  
22 the City Council districts. Oh, I want them in  
23 my assembly district so it will be easier to put  
24 one with me. I don't want -- I want to be only  
25 in the East Side. No, no, I don't want to have

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1 the south, the east and the west, but they want  
2 to have what I am reciting.

3 The most correct thing that has to be done  
4 with dividing by West 100th Street. Let West  
5 100th Street represent the one percent. North of  
6 West 100th Street represent the 99 percent. And  
7 their elected official, claiming the community of  
8 interest, trying to keep the 99 percent of  
9 Columbus Square, that's south of West 100th  
10 Street, the one percent, which is anyone who  
11 resides south of West 100th Street is a one  
12 percent. North of West 100th street, that is a  
13 99 percent.

14 So, the line to have no people being drawn,  
15 the currently proposed line of District 7. It is  
16 a shame that an elected official is afraid of  
17 representing their own people of the South Bronx  
18 claiming that community, to represent the people  
19 of the one percent of Columbus Square. That's  
20 what happened, bringing people to mount a theater  
21 here. I would not be afraid of representing  
22 anyone, especially if you have been voted in,  
23 claiming, and with the flag, oh, the people, my  
24 people, right, I represented south Bronx, one is  
25 representing the one percent of Columbus Square

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1 people -- (timer dings) -- and that's current  
2 District 8.

3 It cannot be the way they have in the East  
4 because the district change. We have the one  
5 percent population people within the district.  
6 You cannot put those people with the South Bronx.  
7 And that's right. Congratulations Commission.  
8 The job could not have been done better than what  
9 it is. You cannot please everybody. I am very  
10 proud of the job you have done. Keep the job  
11 well done as you have done it. Thank you.

12 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Timothy  
13 Harrell, to be followed by Yma Rodriguez. At  
14 this time, we have more registered speakers than  
15 we have time to accommodate in the next hour, so  
16 I am going to ask if possible, you could keep  
17 your comments to less than three minutes so that  
18 the people at the end of the line will still be  
19 able to testify. Again, you can also submit  
20 written testimony which the commissioners will  
21 receive and review. Timothy Harrell?

22 MR. HARRELL: Good evening, thank you. I am  
23 going to keep this real short. I didn't write a  
24 speech and I am not -- I don't even have the  
25 layman's knowledge of what redistricting really

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1 entails. But from the minute research I did do,  
2 just the track record alone shows that, when you  
3 redistrict in minority communities, it's usually  
4 never in favor of the people who live in those  
5 neighborhoods.

6 And the bottom line of it is that real  
7 simple. It's usually just someone who is either  
8 in office and has a designated successor or  
9 someone who wants to jump into that seat who  
10 wants to succeed someone who hired a consultant  
11 who said if you draw the line this way, it's  
12 going to sway political power. It's going to  
13 sway votes your way.

14 There's a thing in America, due process.  
15 So, allow the due process. Allow the process to  
16 take its course the way it has been running.  
17 Don't allow these individuals to manipulate the  
18 political system. Don't allow them to manipulate  
19 the communities or the people that they plan to  
20 invade, because when you link neighborhoods and  
21 districts to other neighborhoods, linking uptown  
22 and Harlem to what they call Upper West Side or  
23 whatever, Upper East Side, you have a high-income  
24 neighborhood and a low-income neighborhood that  
25 you plan to merge. And if this individual who

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1 holds a position or holds a seat who has been  
2 serving a high-income neighborhood, who is to say  
3 that he is going to come in and have the same  
4 thoughts and the same concerns for the people who  
5 live in that low-income neighborhood?

6 I hear people speaking about, you know,  
7 living in NYCHA or living in New York City  
8 housing. They are living under a totally  
9 different condition on 103rd Street than they are  
10 on 172nd Street. So, we need at some point, you  
11 know, speaking to you members on the panel, I  
12 don't know, I have been to a lot of PP hearings  
13 that the DOE sets up and it's usually a waste of  
14 time.

15 Come out, everybody is yelling and they  
16 still close the school. So, I don't know if it's  
17 going to be the same process here where people  
18 come and they address you, and you are still  
19 going to draw that line and it's still going to  
20 happen. I don't know what going to happen. But  
21 I am going to ask you in all good conscience not  
22 to allow these individuals to sway you or  
23 influence you to do something that you know is  
24 not correct.

25 Because it seems that that line that they

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1 have drawn that is returning between the West  
2 Side and the East Side, it just happens to be a  
3 lot of development going on over there. They put  
4 up a hotel on 125th and Park, a lot of co-ops and  
5 condos. It fits in real nice with that  
6 atmosphere down on 96th Street, 81st Street, 72nd  
7 Street. That whole line all the way up through  
8 the Bronx, they are doing all this investment.

9 So, to try to keep that same level of  
10 high-income people, it's not fair. My sister who  
11 happens to live on 125th Street and Fifth Avenue  
12 and they are trying to get her out of that  
13 building. It's ironic, she happens to live in  
14 that zone they are trying to redistrict (timer  
15 dings). And that's crazy. Sandy hit people and  
16 unfortunately, the economy hit people here, too.

17 We need to keep legislation that keeps the  
18 best intentions and concerns of the people that  
19 live in that community involved. We need to keep  
20 them involved, the Keith Wrights, the Bill  
21 Perkins (sic). We need to keep those people in  
22 line and not bring in these people like Brad  
23 Hoylman who just won the State Senate seat and he  
24 is a developer and he caused all is that down in  
25 Stuyvesant Town. And I am like what is going on

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1 here? It's crazy. I am going to end it right  
2 here. Thank you for giving me the time, and you  
3 guys have a blessed evening.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Let's not use that as an  
5 example of keeping it brief. Our next speaker is  
6 Yma Rodriguez, to be followed by Christina  
7 Johnson.

8 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hi, my name is Juna Perth  
9 (phonetic) and I am 17 and a high school senior  
10 from El Barrio. And today I have the pleasure of  
11 speaking on behalf of my mother, Yma Rodriguez,  
12 and the youth of East Harlem. Thank you for the  
13 opportunity to be heard on this very important  
14 issue and restoring La Marqueta back to  
15 District 8.

16 I am here on behalf of members of  
17 Puertorriqueños Unidos of the State of New York,  
18 most of whom reside in East Harlem where the  
19 organization was founded. I am here to tell the  
20 Commission that we are adamantly opposed to the  
21 Commission reducing El Barrio's district by  
22 30 blocks. We are demanding that East Harlem  
23 district lines be fully restored. The portion of  
24 East Harlem within District 8 should remain  
25 unchanged from the previous map.

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1 Common Cause has presented a proposal that  
2 restores East Harlem district lines and which we  
3 unanimously support. This map restores the  
4 integrity of our beloved El Barrio, keeps  
5 Randall's and Wards Island in the district and  
6 still grows District 8's portion of the Bronx.

7 As you know, El Barrio is one of the largest  
8 Latino communities in New York City. El Barrio  
9 is an historic and cultural community of  
10 interest. We are the cradle of Puerto Rican  
11 community in the United States. We are asking  
12 the Commission to respect our community and not  
13 give into political power plays that will  
14 undermine our legacy.

15 Although we love our brothers and sisters in  
16 the good borough of the Bronx, we see absolutely  
17 no reason to make this district 50 percent in the  
18 Bronx. We are our own community with our only  
19 distinct attributes and concerns. We are asking  
20 that the Commission stop its intention to create  
21 a Bronx majority district and instead draw  
22 District 8 based on the realities of our  
23 community.

24 We are our own economic community of  
25 interest, primarily made up of working-class



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1 families and with a large concentration of public  
2 housing. Metropolitan and Mount Sinai Hospitals,  
3 two of the most important and distinguished  
4 institutions should remain in District 8. These  
5 important institutions serve and employ a large  
6 portion of our community. We have helped build  
7 and grow them and we want and need them in our  
8 community.

9 Our public development housing should remain  
10 united. We would like to know what logic was  
11 used by the Commission when you divided the  
12 Lexington and Carver Houses and put them in a  
13 district that in no way represents or reflects  
14 their interests. Ask yourselves how are those  
15 developments being served by your current plan?  
16 But the Lexington and Carver Houses developments  
17 belong in District 8 where their interest will be  
18 properly addressed by people who understand their  
19 needs and concerns.

20 Taft Houses was also divided -- (timer  
21 dings) -- in two districts. We ask you, how does  
22 this make sense? Randall's Island should not be  
23 taken out of our district. It belongs in  
24 Manhattan and already shares a community board  
25 with our district.

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1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you, thank you. We  
2 have to go on because other people need to speak.

3 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is  
4 Dr. Lewis Smoler, to be followed by John Medina.

5 MR. SMOLER: I was on the board of the 10  
6 West End Avenue condo for about a year, and I was  
7 treasurer. Unfortunately, we never heard of this  
8 meeting or any of the redistricting issues while  
9 I was on the board. I don't know whose fault it  
10 is, but I did find out by e-mail on the way back  
11 from Key West where I was bringing my daughter's  
12 ashes. She died of a massive stroke at the age  
13 of 49 just last week.

14 But I find it so important to speak on  
15 behalf of my building that I am here tonight. 10  
16 West End Avenue is between 59th and 60th street.  
17 The plan is to move us from District 6 to  
18 District 3. By doing so, our next-door neighbors  
19 will become all of the dealerships for all of the  
20 automobiles in Manhattan, plus a mini-storage  
21 that would lose the continuity of a community  
22 that exists with the other neighborhoods  
23 immediately contingent to us that really  
24 represents the Upper West Side.

25 One of the main reasons I bought in the

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1 building I am in, my apartment actually  
2 represents the value that will go on for my  
3 remaining children when my wife and I, who are  
4 retired now, die.

5 If you stood in front of our building, you  
6 would scratch your heads to figure out why you  
7 have moved the line. We live right across the  
8 street from the Riverside South Center Project,  
9 which is a third-largest project in New York City  
10 at the present time after WTC, and the Yard  
11 Project, which will result, by the way, in a  
12 tremendous upsurge of population in District 3.

13 There is no reason to have moved our  
14 building. We ask you to please reconsider. Put  
15 us back in the Upper West Side. Keep us in  
16 District 7 so we have some say over the project  
17 directly across the street. I could literally  
18 run out my front door and be in the middle of a  
19 construction site. We will no longer have any  
20 say.

21 Thank you very much. I don't envy your job.  
22 I can't understand how in the world you can  
23 please so many people that you do please, but in  
24 this instance, it's one building. Please put us  
25 back. Bye.

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: It appears I skipped over  
2 Christina Johnson, so if Christina Johnson is  
3 here, we will hear from her and then John Medina.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Good evening. I am here to  
5 represent Lexington Houses. I am the resident  
6 association president for that development. I  
7 came here this evening to speak about how --

8 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Would you get a little  
9 closer to the mic, please.

10 MS. JOHNSON: -- about how you are dividing  
11 our development. We are a very small  
12 development. We are only four buildings, and yet  
13 you are taking two of our buildings out of our  
14 neighborhood and moving them over to the West  
15 Side.

16 Everything that I wanted to say to you  
17 tonight everyone has said, so I am not going to  
18 reiterate anything that anyone has said. They  
19 come to you with statistics. They come to you  
20 with feelings. They come to you with things I  
21 can't come to you with. I am really new to all  
22 of this process.

23 However, I would like for you to take a look  
24 at me. Really, look at me. I am Lexington  
25 Houses. I am a person. I have feelings. I can

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1 be touched. I can think and I can breathe. I  
2 have a community that I live in. I have lived in  
3 that community for 25 years. I have raised my  
4 children there. I have worked as a teacher in  
5 that neighborhood for 13 years.

6 I ask you, I beg you not to take my  
7 neighbors away from me. They are my friends.  
8 They are my family. They are the village that  
9 has helped me raise my children. I am the  
10 village that helps them raise theirs. We are a  
11 community together and I ask that you leave us  
12 intact.

13 I ask that you leave Taft intact. They are  
14 exactly as we are. They are a community of  
15 people with feelings and wants and needs and  
16 neighbors and friends, and neighbors that have  
17 been family to them. Do not tear us apart.  
18 Thank you.

19 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
20 John Medina, followed by Diana Rivera.

21 MR. MEDINA: Dear community members and  
22 Council leaders, as mentioned in previous  
23 testimony, my grandfather Mr. Lopez immigrated  
24 here to Spanish Harlem in 1940 from Spain because  
25 of the fascist regime under Franco. He shortly

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1 got drafted into the navy and he died on a ship  
2 by a German submarine torpedo.

3 My father also lived in Harlem his whole  
4 life. He died in the Korean War. My uncles all  
5 died in Vietnam serving this country, and they  
6 are also from Harlem. I also served in Kuwait,  
7 Desert Storm, Desert Shield. I have two brothers  
8 in Afghanistan fighting for this country, and we  
9 are all from Harlem. We are District 8.

10 The new wave of immigrants striving in this  
11 diverse melting pots would be deprived of this  
12 neighborhood's rich heritage if sections of  
13 Spanish Harlem are cut out of District 8. Please  
14 do not allow the very few cultural landmarks  
15 Spanish Harlem residents have left to call their  
16 own just because of what looks like backroom  
17 political deals, including Mount Sinai Hospital?  
18 Are you kidding me, 150-institution?

19 I mean, come on. That's the best thing that  
20 ever happened to Harlem, and you want to cut this  
21 out from District 8 which has been a stable  
22 institution? It needs to be included in District  
23 8. Please reconsider. I am a leader at the  
24 organization Community Voices Heard, a community  
25 organizing group based on 106th Street and

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1           Lexington Avenue.

2           We asked Common Cause, a nonpartisan  
3           watchdog group and expert on redistricting issues  
4           if it was possible to draw maps so that we could  
5           keep East Harlem together. And it's based in  
6           Manhattan. Common Cause has shown that  
7           District 8 can be kept together. If the  
8           Commission chooses to implement this plan, it  
9           would be a win/win situation instead of the  
10          Commission being cheap just following political  
11          power brokers.

12          Now, I am not an expert on redistricting,  
13          but it seems like there are plenty of good  
14          options to keep District 8 in Manhattan and keep  
15          El Barrio together. I am District 8. Thank you.

16          MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Diana  
17          Rivera, to be followed by Peggy Shepard. All  
18          right. If there is no Diana Rivera, then Peggy  
19          Shepard, followed by Liuvia Perez.

20          MS. SHEPARD: Good evening. I am Peggy  
21          Shepard, executive director of West Harlem  
22          Environmental Action. I am a resident of the  
23          Hamilton Heights Historic District in West Harlem  
24          and I am former democratic leader who respected  
25          West Harlem in the 75th Assembly District for

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1 eight years between '85 and 1993.

2 Now, I have come to register my protest and  
3 that of other Convent Avenue and Hamilton Heights  
4 residents that our homes have been drawn away  
5 from our neighbors from the 7th into the 9th  
6 Central Harlem City Council District. Now, ten  
7 years ago, we organized in West Harlem and had  
8 about as many people here as East Harlem now has,  
9 and we came to advocate for the second black seat  
10 in the City Council, which became the seat that  
11 Stanley Michaels ran for and Robert Jackson was  
12 elected to represent.

13 Now, at the time, West Harlem had been a  
14 part of the Central Harlem City Council District.  
15 But West Harlem residents persuasively made the  
16 case that its residents were an afterthought to  
17 Central Harlem officials, and that  
18 geographically, we should be in a west corridor  
19 seat.

20 If any of you are familiar with uptown  
21 neighborhoods, then you know that Saint Nicholas  
22 Park is a geographical barrier between 126th and  
23 141st Streets that does not allow easy access to  
24 from West to Central Harlem. And then Jackie  
25 Robinson Park is a barrier between West End



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1 Central Harlem above 145th Streets. And that's  
2 the reason that Board 9, Community Board 9 has a  
3 border that runs along Saint Nicholas Park.

4 A key reason that residents in West Harlem  
5 are enthusiastic about staying in the 7th is  
6 because we are a waterfront community. We are  
7 affected by very different issues and  
8 environmental impacts than Central Harlem.

9 If my neighborhood is redrawn into Central  
10 Harlem, then my neighbors will need to work  
11 extensively with two City Council representatives  
12 because most of our impacts, from the Columbia  
13 University expansion over the next 30 years, the  
14 North River sewage treatment plans, air quality  
15 impacts, the Riverbank State Park maintenance  
16 issue, these are all challenges practitioner to a  
17 waterfront community like West Harlem. That  
18 affects our health, our well-being and our  
19 neighborhood quality of life.

20 I urge the question to allow the Hamilton  
21 Heights, Sugar Hill, Historic District and Lower  
22 Convent Avenue and to remain represented by one  
23 council person. Now, I can understand how a City  
24 Council member might want my neighborhood in  
25 their district because we are one of the

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1 highest-voting EDs in the area. However, my  
2 neighborhood is active in Community Board 9 and  
3 in achieving many of the benefits that have now  
4 accrued to West Harlem.

5 Again, if you look at the population --  
6 (timer dings) -- in the districts, Board 7 now  
7 will have four to 8,000 less residents. So, I  
8 urge you to keep the lower Convent Avenue and  
9 Hamilton Heights districting together in the 7th.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker  
11 is Liuvia Perez, followed by Terry Grace. Okay,  
12 Terry Grace followed by Sandra Johnson.

13 MS. GRACE: Good evening, all. Happy New  
14 Year.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Tilt the mic up towards you.

16 MS. GRACE: I said good evening, Happy New  
17 Year and thank you for serving on this committee.  
18 My name is Terry Grace. For 24 years, I have  
19 lived at 530 East 76th Street next to John Jay  
20 Park on the East Side of Manhattan. I am very  
21 active in East 79th Street Neighborhood  
22 Association as head of the John Jay Park  
23 Committee, and I am totally committed to the  
24 preservation, upgrades and beautification of the  
25 this little park for the thousands of adults and

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1 children that use its services every single day.

2 I lead volunteer groups of children and  
3 families, totaling over 250 individuals this past  
4 fall to clean up and plant in John Jay Park and  
5 its peripheral streets. Our most consistent  
6 family groups are spring and fall Mitzvah Days  
7 from Temple Shaaray Tefila, who bring about 40  
8 people each time, including children as young as  
9 eight, to come and work in the park.

10 That temple is located at 79th Street and  
11 Second Avenue on the southwest corner of that  
12 intersection. Many of the Temple's members and  
13 our volunteers actually live north and west of  
14 the Temple, still in District 5 at the moment.  
15 And they choose to serve in this park on their  
16 Mitzvah Day. Their interests and concerns for  
17 their neighborhood extend east of them, east of  
18 the Temple and east of where they live.

19 John Jay Park has been a singular interest  
20 of the council member of District 5 for at least  
21 the 24 years that I have lived and worked in that  
22 area. The groups who work in the park have  
23 always been recognized by the council member for  
24 their dedication. The park would not be  
25 maintained as well or as beautiful as it is

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1 without them. The member who represents this  
2 community knows that.

3 The support from the Temple members and East  
4 79th Street Neighborhood Association members as  
5 far north as 81st Street and as far west as  
6 Lexington Avenue has helped this small jewel of a  
7 park serve thousands of constituents. This  
8 community of interest, similar to Breezy Point  
9 pulling together during Hurricane Sandy, is  
10 community at its best, loving and sharing and the  
11 care of our surroundings and each other.

12 In the southern part of District 5, where I  
13 used to live, a whole neighborhood was moved to  
14 District 4, but it was kept together. That's the  
15 key thing. It was kept together as a community.  
16 It's a small neighborhood. It's neither  
17 productive nor compassionate to divide the 79th  
18 Street community that has been so committed to  
19 the neighborhood for so many years.

20 And we should not separate neighbors who  
21 share common interests and concerns just for the  
22 sake of three blocks and a few numbers. The  
23 hearts and minds of the community members face  
24 east, not west (timer dings). Please don't move  
25 the lines of the community to close them out.

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is  
2 Ms. Sandra Johnson, to be followed by Ariel  
3 Guerrero. And we are going to decrease the time  
4 to speak to two minutes to try to make sure we  
5 can hear from everyone. So, Ms. Sandra Johnson.

6 MS. JOHNSON: Hi, hello everybody. I am on  
7 125th Street. I was here before and it didn't  
8 seem to me that anything would make a difference,  
9 what I say or what I got involved with. I am  
10 with Community For Change Now. I am also  
11 starting my own tenant association business. I  
12 also reached out to my Congressman and everybody  
13 else. As far as Keith Wright and all of them, I  
14 have also reached out to them.

15 I went to Rangel. I have called  
16 commissioners. I went, I think, over and beyond  
17 what my knowledge of my own capabilities are.  
18 But when I realize that I am fighting not just  
19 the people that own my building, I am fighting  
20 politics. I don't know how to do that. I don't  
21 have a leg to stand on. So therefore, my  
22 building was sold and now it was kept there like  
23 the building has been abandoned for five years.  
24 And nobody won't do nothing about it.

25 When I look around, I thought I was the only

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1 one, but my whole community in my area,  
2 District 8 has been sold out, signed the papers  
3 to sell our building and left us there. Now, the  
4 building is rotten and corroded and me and my  
5 kids, my seven grands and me, we live in a  
6 building that's abandoned. And all I am getting  
7 is that my voice doesn't matter. I am fighting  
8 my schools. I be a voice to the keep that  
9 surround me. I help those who got kicked out of  
10 their home illegally.

11 MR. HACKWORTH: 15 seconds --

12 MS. JOHNSON -- by the courthouse when they  
13 deregulated the buildings whenever they pleased  
14 to and people was put out. Homes was taken.  
15 Buildings were closed before our eyes. Black  
16 people cannot afford anything and we are not  
17 going to get anything. And I already know  
18 because the last meeting I was in, they letting  
19 us hear our voice, but the decision has already  
20 been made, so we are already kicked out.

21 MR. HACKWORTH: Your time is up. Thank you.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

23 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Ariel  
24 Guerrero, to be followed by M. Provost St. Peters  
25 Bluestone.

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1 MR. GUERRERO: Thank you. My name is Ariel  
2 Guerrero. Good evening, Chair Romano and  
3 commissioners. I am a resident of East Harlem.  
4 I actually started my career in East Harlem. I  
5 started my career at Mount Sinai Medical Center.  
6 I worked in nonprofit in East Harlem and have  
7 since then have continued to work in the  
8 neighborhood.

9 Here, I look at the New York City charter  
10 and I look at Section 52, Subsection E, and you  
11 are charged with maintaining lines that keep  
12 intact communities with established ties of  
13 common interest and association. This section  
14 also goes as far as to ensure the protection of  
15 historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious  
16 and other interests to the district.

17 Now, several examples of concerns that I  
18 have with the plan relating to a specific section  
19 regard to one, the initial removal of La Marqueta  
20 from the original plan. I thank you for  
21 including that back in the revised plan. The  
22 removal of Mount Sinai Medical Center, an  
23 intricate partner that has significant  
24 established ties of communities surrounding them.  
25 As you heard through multiple testimonies, this

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1 is an institution that means a lot to the  
2 community.

3 And part of this when you look at the  
4 redistricting, you also have to look at whose  
5 economic interests are you really looking forward  
6 to? And we remove such an institution in a small  
7 chunk. We have to maintain contiguous lines.  
8 That's also, again, in Section 52. Now, are we  
9 really maintaining contiguous lines when we  
10 remove that part?

11 Another issue I have here, and you also  
12 heard in multiple testimonies, removal and  
13 actually the splitting of major NYCHA housing  
14 complexes. Carver and Lexington Houses are  
15 examples of those, removal of Randall's Island  
16 and Wards Island as well. These are all the  
17 components of East Harlem that, again, we go back  
18 to subsection, that you guys are charged to  
19 maintain.

20 These are historical components that mean a  
21 lot to the community. These are things that  
22 bring the people into this community for. They  
23 look forward to. These are institutions that we  
24 are proud to call ours as East Harlem residents.  
25 Furthermore -- (timer dings) --



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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Just finish your sentence.

2 MR. GUERRERO: I will wrap it up there.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is  
5 M. Provost St. Peters Bluestone, to be followed  
6 by Cyrus Sadiq. Okay, do we have Cyrus Sadiq?  
7 Cyrus Sadiq, to be followed by Stan Koehler.

8 MR. SADIQ: Hi there. I will try to be  
9 quick. I am starving, so I am sure you are as  
10 well to get home to dinner. I live in 10 West  
11 End Avenue between 59th and 60th, like the  
12 gentleman whose daughter passed away last week.  
13 And I basically have come to talk about the  
14 issues he and I believe Council Speaker Gale  
15 Brewer were talking about.

16 What is being considered redistricting our  
17 building from District 6 to District 3. And we  
18 live right opposite the massive new Riverside  
19 Center Project being proposed by Extell just  
20 across the street between 59th and 61st, between  
21 West Side Highway and West End Avenue. There,  
22 however, will still be apartment of District 6.

23 I eagerly await and welcome the new  
24 development and am excited about it, but these  
25 buildings are going to have a massive impact on

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1 the entire area and our building more than any  
2 other, being so close to us. The buildings have  
3 already been controversial. They block the views  
4 of residents and cause upheaval on our streets.

5 But the important factor is by moving our  
6 building into District 3, we will lose all our  
7 voice to impact the development there. The  
8 redistricting, putting our building into  
9 District 3, seems totally arbitrary and unjust  
10 when we are above 59th Street just like the new  
11 Riverside Development Project which hasn't even  
12 been built yet.

13 The other side of Riverside Center is Hudson  
14 River, as you know, the edge of Manhattan. So  
15 physically and geographically, there is no reason  
16 why Riverside Center should be a part of  
17 District 6 and all of a sudden, we are being  
18 plucked out of it and put into District 3. So, I  
19 ask the Commission to keep our district.

20 I moved to that area five years ago. We  
21 were the first buildings in that area. It was  
22 hardly any sense of community. There was barren  
23 parking lots everywhere and construction sites  
24 widespread. Our neighborhood is just developing  
25 a sense of neighborhood, and we are being plucked

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1 out of the district and being set back five  
2 years -- (timer dings) -- of community building,  
3 taking us away from our neighbors into District 3  
4 that stretches from Hell's Kitchen to Canal  
5 Street. This seems, absolutely makes no sense to  
6 me and I urge you to please reconsider this.  
7 Thank you.

8 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Stan  
9 Koehler, to be followed by Robert Bothold.

10 MR. JOEHLER: Hi, my name is Stan Koehler.  
11 I am the director of Peace on the Street. We are  
12 an agency there in Spanish Harlem. I also live  
13 there at 117th Street. Our main concern is  
14 dealing with violence in the community with the  
15 youth with gangs, guns and so on.

16 I would ask the Commission to restore the  
17 two projects, Carver and Lexington, as a single  
18 unit. It simply makes our job easier getting  
19 resources, to get resources from a representative  
20 who is concerned with that problem. We simply  
21 have more of a problem than maybe somebody on  
22 Park and 87th Street as far as dealing with that  
23 and getting the resources. It make it a lot  
24 easier for us to work in a single project.

25 The thing we are most concerned with is

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1           Randall's Island. This provides a major source  
2           for the youth as far as being able to provide  
3           recreation and such. It's my understanding that  
4           the real problem that population over there of  
5           about 1,500 that that would violate the  
6           50 percent rule and consequentially would cause  
7           us to lose another part of our neighborhood.

8           I would suggest that there is a middle path  
9           that we could do. I think a careful drawing of  
10          boundaries could move Queens and just take the  
11          population and give it to Queens and give us back  
12          the best of the island. That way, we could  
13          basically satisfy both issues. Thank you very  
14          much.

15          MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker  
16          is Robert Bothold, to be followed by Johnny  
17          Rivera.

18          MR. BOTHOLD: Hi. I am the democratic  
19          district leader and I have represented Manhattan  
20          Valley for the last 17 years. But more  
21          importantly, I am a 43-year resident of the  
22          District. I am speaking tonight to address the  
23          continuing division of Manhattan Valley. It's a  
24          close-knit neighborhood on the Upper West Side  
25          from Central Park to Riverside Side between 96th

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1 and 110th Street. The commissioners have heard  
2 about the oddity of the Upper West Side.

3 Our very diverse community of strong  
4 interest has been divided in the past and is now  
5 being further divided between Council District 7  
6 and 9, unreasonably and un-rationally. Our  
7 natural community lines are bounded by the Hudson  
8 River and Central Park and Morningside Park.  
9 That's the geography. Every single City service  
10 and administrative agency looks at it as a single  
11 unit. The 24th Precinct serves the entire  
12 Manhattan Valley. The school district does, the  
13 5th Judicial district, the Columbus Amsterdam  
14 Theater, the local theater all serve 96th to  
15 110th between Central Park and Riverside Park,  
16 the library district, the health district.

17 Only this Districting Commission seeks to  
18 divide the district and finds a way to put a  
19 finger up one district into the middle of  
20 Manhattan Valley. Our community, though  
21 ethnically and economically diverse, works  
22 together. It's not just the City that sees this.  
23 In 2007, we put together a zoning plan, an unique  
24 zoning plan that covered 96th to 110th, Central  
25 Park to Riverside Drive. And we got that after

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1 two years of working. Everyone in the community,  
2 black, white, old and young, working together.  
3 We got a new zoning plan.

4 Two years later, the community worked  
5 together to kick out the charter schools that  
6 tried to replace the public schools. This  
7 community thinks so much of its own neighbors, of  
8 its own people. The PSs are so strong that both  
9 P.S. 145 and P.S. 163, both Manhattan Valley --  
10 (timer dings) -- rejected the charter school and  
11 they were forced to go to another part of the  
12 City.

13 In every way, there was another rezoning no  
14 less than last year, but again, specifically for  
15 Manhattan Valley. Only this Districting  
16 Commission seeks to replace that.

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

18 MR. BOTHOLD: There is a solution. Common  
19 Cause has proposed a solution to put the line  
20 across 110th Street for 7 and 9.

21 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

22 MR. BOTHOLD: That lines make sense and  
23 should be adopted.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Johnny  
25 Rivera, to be followed by John Ruiz.

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1 MR. RIVERA: Good evening. I am a resident  
2 of East Harlem, born and raised. When I think of  
3 a community of community interest, I think about  
4 the people who walk in a given space. They share  
5 space because they go to local grocery store.  
6 They shop at the supermarket. They go to the  
7 place of worship. They attend school. They live  
8 in a certain building and they talk to each  
9 other. That's East Harlem.

10 Restoring the 30 blocks that were taken away  
11 would allow for this community, my beloved  
12 community, to have a voice, a single voice that  
13 is so desperately need. By taking away the  
14 30 blocks or so and spreading us into the Bronx,  
15 you have shot us dead, political speaking. I do  
16 not appreciate that from you.

17 You have a job to do, to keep this community  
18 together. We are not to be taken for granted  
19 because some other political agenda has to be  
20 fulfilled. We want this community together. We  
21 stand together. We suffer. We celebrate. We  
22 come together. But your voice, your actions, you  
23 should not be able to sleep tonight or the next  
24 night. You are hurting us in such a way.

25 And I don't care about the current existing

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1 political situations. I am looking at ten years  
2 from now. Ten years that I, my family, my  
3 friends and my neighbors have to live with these  
4 lines. How dare you take that away from us? You  
5 should be ashamed of yourself. We want those  
6 30 blocks back. We want Lexington and Carver  
7 Houses together.

8 Randall's Island, who has worked on  
9 Randall's Island? For Community Board 11 stayed  
10 up late at night patching out plans, thinking  
11 about it, talking about it, so that you can give  
12 it away? How dare you? Really, how dare you?  
13 You frankly don't know my community. And I hope  
14 you don't walk around there late at night,  
15 either. Good night.

16 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be  
17 John Ruiz, followed by Julian Gerenu. Do we have  
18 John Ruiz? Julian Gerenu, to be followed by  
19 Barbara Nelson.

20 MR. GERENU: Good evening. Hello, my name  
21 is Julian Gerenu and my family has been an  
22 integral member of the East Harlem community for  
23 over 40 years. I am here representing them as  
24 resident of East Harlem and El Barrio and  
25 expressing my disapproval for the proposed



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1 changes to District 8. Proposing that 50 percent  
2 of the district be located in the Bronx divides  
3 communities of interest. This Commission should  
4 give up on its intention to create a Bronx  
5 majority district, and instead draw District 8  
6 based on the realities of our community.

7 When it comes to what is best for our  
8 communities, your proposed plan calls into  
9 question the intentions and integrity of this  
10 committee. The lines this committee is proposing  
11 will disenfranchise and decentralize District 8  
12 by weakening our political base and fragmenting  
13 our resources. Our public housing should remain  
14 united. Your plan would divide Lexington and  
15 Carver Houses by uniting them with District 4,  
16 which does not reflect its demographic makeup.

17 I would not be alone in saying you are not  
18 acting in our favor or in the public's favor. I  
19 am confident that, just as you re-included La  
20 Marqueta back into District, you will do what is  
21 fair and just to unify East Harlem, Mott Haven,  
22 Manhattan Valley and Randall's Island. Thank  
23 you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Barbara  
25 Nelson, to be followed by Martina Garcia.

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1 MS. NELSON: Good evening, everybody. I am  
2 Barbara Nelson. Excuse my voice. I am on the  
3 co-op board of 181st Street and Haven Avenue, so  
4 I direct your eyes and your thoughts back up to  
5 Northern Manhattan. By including our portion of  
6 District 7 into 10, will completely decimate our  
7 relationships with the district leaders.

8 We are two distinct, different neighborhoods  
9 with different goals and needs. And by moving 7  
10 over, we will be diminished in the quality of  
11 representation and personal contact with the  
12 council people. Our goals are to help grow the  
13 value of the real estate, small business  
14 development, development of the parks programming  
15 and general quality of life issues.

16 We now have the lowest crime rate in the  
17 city, at the last reading of the stats. We will  
18 work to keep it that way. If you break us away  
19 from the rest of 7 and put it into 10, we will  
20 not have the same presence in working with the  
21 council people that we have now. So, I hope when  
22 you look at 7, you will keep it in contact.  
23 Thank you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: The our next speaker is  
25 Martina Garcia, to be followed by Thomas

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1 Lopez-Pierre. Thomas Lopez-Pierre, to be  
2 followed by Cynthia Doty.

3 MR. LOPEZ-PIERRE: Thank you. I want to  
4 give a different opinion tonight. I want to  
5 praise the Commission. I live in Manhattan  
6 Valley on 105th and Columbus. And I want to  
7 thank you for, one, freeing us from East Harlem.  
8 As much as East Harlem is a great community and I  
9 love my current councilwoman, unless she is going  
10 to move to the West Side, it's time for us to  
11 part. I am extremely grateful to you guys for  
12 pointing us the way the district is cut now.

13 However, I have minor suggestions. One is,  
14 I am a candidate for the 7th Council District.  
15 If I live across the street, I would be in the  
16 district. I live in a rent-controlled apartment.  
17 If there is some way to move Columbus Avenue from  
18 104th to 110th back east, let Manhattan Avenue be  
19 the borderline, I would appreciate that.

20 The second thing is you are going to be  
21 given some suggestions about Manhattan Valley  
22 being one community. And I need the Commission  
23 to really grasp this concept. We are not one  
24 community. It's a big lie. It's a high-income  
25 white area and a black and Hispanic area. And we

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1 love the district the way it is. We want to be  
2 connected to Harlem. That is what we feel.  
3 That's what we are. We don't shop at the  
4 high-end restaurants. We do not eat there.

5 Intellectually and racially, we are a part  
6 of Harlem and that's where we want to be  
7 connected to. Please do not add Park West  
8 Village, which is currently out of the district,  
9 into the district. If you do that, you will  
10 destroy any chance of a person of color getting  
11 elected.

12 There are currently ten candidates in this  
13 race and any inclusion of anymore white voters  
14 would destroy this opportunity. The way the  
15 district was cut by 100th Street that includes  
16 Douglas Houses, that was brilliant. I praise  
17 your leadership on that matter. And I only ask  
18 with my last seconds that I support and conquer  
19 with Peggy Shepard. Please add more of the black  
20 voters over there on Convent Avenue. It would  
21 strengthen the district. Thank you.

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Cynthia  
23 Doty, to be followed by Lauren Putrino.

24 MS. DOTY: Good evening. My name is Cynthia  
25 Doty. I am the democratic district leader for

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1 the 69th Assembly District Part A, which includes  
2 Manhattan Valley and the Upper West Side. I am  
3 here, first of all, to thank you for holding this  
4 hearing. And I hope that you will be as  
5 transparent with your reasoning for the divisions  
6 that you produce as a result of this hearing and  
7 that you give the public an opportunity. It's  
8 important for us to be able to weigh in again and  
9 be as democratic as possible.

10 I am testifying tonight in opposition with  
11 the lines that you have most recently drawn. I  
12 think they divide communities, especially  
13 District 8. East Harlem should not be divided up  
14 the way you have done it. I think it was  
15 outrageous. It's a huge slap in the face of all  
16 the people who have come out to testify.

17 As someone mentioned earlier, the people who  
18 live in the current District 8 have had the  
19 highest participation in any of the Manhattan  
20 hearings. And I think you need to be responding  
21 to them as opposed to any of the closed-door  
22 meetings that you are having with other powerful  
23 people. So, I think you should respond to the  
24 community and redraw District 8.

25 I am also dismayed that you have divided up

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1 the community of Manhattan Valley. The area  
2 between 96th Street and 110th Street, Riverside  
3 to Central Park, unlike the person who testified  
4 just before me is, in fact, a community that has  
5 worked together and played together for many,  
6 many years. I lived there for 37 years. I  
7 represented that area. We played together. We  
8 shop together. Our kids go to the schools. We  
9 support our schools. We support our stores.

10 And I think it is important that that area  
11 be drawn as compactly as possible. We need to  
12 have, instead of three parts, three different  
13 council districts the way you have drawn it, it  
14 should be at least two, if not one. I support  
15 the Common Cause map -- (timer dings) -- but I  
16 would even prefer if you would divide and make  
17 the area between Central Park, Riverside, 110th  
18 to 96th one compact district. Also --

19 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

20 MS. DOTY: You have divided NYCHA houses,  
21 just so you know.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Your time is up.

23 MS. DOTY: There's a section of NYCHA houses  
24 that has been divided --

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We need to --

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1 MS. DOTY: -- included in the same.

2 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We are going to run out of  
3 time, and then a speaker won't have an  
4 opportunity to speak.

5 MS. DOTY: Some people are getting more time  
6 with you in closed-door meetings.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is --

8 MS. DOTY: And there is no reason this  
9 couldn't go longer. I don't know why it has to  
10 stop at 9:00. Two hours for a hearing for public  
11 testimony? It seems outrageous.

12 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Lauren  
13 Putrino, to be followed by David Poiman.

14 MS. PUTRINO: Thank you for hearing us  
15 today. I am here about the southern line of  
16 District 6. Like others you heard tonight, I  
17 live in the building directly across from the new  
18 eight-acre Riverside Center Development, which we  
19 are very excited about.

20 The proposal moves us from District 6 to  
21 District 3. Moving us from the Upper West Side  
22 would be very harmful to our building as the  
23 large Riverside Center development across the  
24 street would remain in District 6. We would lose  
25 our governmental voice to impact this development

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1 by being in District 3. We are one of the first  
2 buildings in an industrial area. We helped grow  
3 the southern part of the district into what it is  
4 today. So, I ask that you please leave the 10  
5 West End Avenue building between 59th and 60th in  
6 the district it helped build. Thank you.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is David  
8 Poiman, to be followed by Dr. Gholson.

9 MR. POIMAN: Hi, my name is David Poiman. I  
10 also represent 10 West End Avenue. I am the  
11 secretary of the board of the building and I  
12 represent most of the tenants and owners of the  
13 units. As has been mentioned before, the seven  
14 border, just been drawn the way that it excluded  
15 our building and a couple of adjoining buildings  
16 from District 6 and putting us in the industrial  
17 area where we don't have any residential impact  
18 and any political power to really say, have a  
19 voice with the Riverside new development.

20 If you look at the proposed borders, it  
21 clearly shows that it takes away some of the  
22 residential in the southern border of it and puts  
23 a whole new development where there are no  
24 tenants at this point yet, and excludes all the  
25 people that are currently living in the



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1 neighborhood and are participating what is going  
2 to be developed there. It takes ability to  
3 propose a new school and the parks and the  
4 community services away from us and puts it in  
5 pure neighborhood with the dealerships and no  
6 other residential buildings.

7 So, I would ask you guys to reconsider on  
8 the south border and include our building back in  
9 District 6. Thank you very much.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is  
11 Dr. Gholson, to be followed by Warren James.

12 DR. GHOLSON: Dr. Vicky Gholson, thank you  
13 for adding this hearing and the upcoming one that  
14 you all have at Hostos College. I am asking as a  
15 member of Community Board 9, when we previously  
16 testified, we had not gotten the determination  
17 from City Council on our rezoning for our area.  
18 We do now have it, and the considerations that  
19 had been given to you before and our concerns and  
20 needs for certain changes are not reflected in  
21 the most recent map.

22 Community Board 9, I am sure along with  
23 Community Boards 10 and Community Boards 11 and  
24 12, would invite the Commission to a smaller  
25 working session, not a hearing, to be able to

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1 specifically talk through recommendations with  
2 the mapping there in a dialogue, in a discourse  
3 which might be able to result in integritous  
4 [sic] changes before the final maps go forward.

5 In addition, I step aside now from Reverend  
6 Georgette Morgan Thomas, who is our chair at  
7 Community Board 9. She is open to have open  
8 conversations and a working meeting with  
9 representatives or with the Commission. We would  
10 hope to be able to have an activity like that  
11 before the final maps are drawn.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: You are welcome to come to  
13 the Commission offices and meet with the staff.  
14 Other groups have done that. It's not a backdoor  
15 meeting. It's an open-door meeting.

16 DR. GHOLSON: Yes, that I know. With  
17 community observers?

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Sure. Whoever has  
19 something to contribute, we listen.

20 DR. GHOLSON: Okay. That will definitely be  
21 relayed. I would like to make my final comments  
22 with regard to Harlem (timer dings). If we look  
23 at the historical legacy of the political  
24 accomplishments that have been made, if we look  
25 at the attributes that have been made in terms of

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1 African Americans and others of African descent,  
2 we have too many contradictions in the present  
3 drawings of the lines.

4 We really need to fine-tune it and I'm  
5 hoping we will see more changes before we get to  
6 the last and final map for the area. And I thank  
7 you for your efforts.

8 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker  
9 is Warren James, who is our last registered  
10 speaker, and then I will recall Diana Rivera,  
11 John Ruiz and Martina Garcia.

12 MR. JAMES: Good evening, my name is Warren  
13 James. I am an urban planner and architect based  
14 in East Harlem. I have recently been a juror in  
15 the waterfront redevelopment competition held by  
16 Civitas, a not-for-profit civic organization that  
17 comprises East Harlem and the Upper East Side.

18 I think that the current map dividing East  
19 Harlem into 50/50 is outrageous. It makes no  
20 sense whatsoever and it sounds like this  
21 Commission is not listening to the voices of the  
22 people who live in East Harlem, the Upper East  
23 Side and the Central Park of the West Side.

24 I also want to discourage this Commission  
25 from even considering taking Central Park away

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1 from District 8. Central Park belongs to  
2 everybody, but District 8 has been taking care of  
3 Central Park for the last 20 years. Central Park  
4 is the piece that really ties together the West,  
5 Central, Manhattan Valley and East Harlem.

6 I want to discourage this Commission from  
7 doing the 50/50. This is a 99 percent district.  
8 We are right now 90 and 10. We cannot go to  
9 50/50. That's outrageous. And finally, as a  
10 board member of the advisory board of Museo del  
11 Barrio, you are dividing it up in such a way that  
12 it will be unrecognizable because you are  
13 separating Museo del Barrio from the future  
14 Museum of African Art on Fifth Avenue and 110th  
15 Street.

16 You are taking away one of our anchors in  
17 the neighborhood which is Mount Sinai. That  
18 should be restored. And if you haven't  
19 remembered, Fifth Avenue divides east and west.  
20 Fifth Avenue should be the divide, the line  
21 between District 9 and District 8.

22 Finally, if you have to go to the Bronx,  
23 take it to District 10. It makes more sense.  
24 They are connected. And after that, consider  
25 connecting District 9 to the Bronx. There is

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1 three bridges connecting that. (Timer dings.)  
2 Randall's Island belongs to District 8. I think  
3 that is the most broad reason for having it  
4 there. Thank you.

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Do we have Diana Rivera,  
6 John Ruiz or Martina Garcia? Mr. Chairman, it  
7 appears we have no additional registered  
8 speakers.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We have five minutes  
10 remaining before the host will think we have  
11 overstayed our welcome. Anyone else who would  
12 like to speak and use two minutes of that five  
13 minutes, in two-minute increments?

14 MR. HACKWORTH: Just identify yourself and  
15 then your district.

16 MS. RUSSELL: Jane Russell. Right now I am  
17 in District 6, but I am part of the 10 West End  
18 Avenue people that are asking why you have taken  
19 one little square piece out and are placing us in  
20 District 3 on the southern end? To the west of  
21 us is District 6, still, and to the east of us.  
22 So, it's just that 10 West End Avenue and a few  
23 buildings around there that are residential are  
24 moved, and I have no idea why.

25 So, I just want to reiterate what Gale

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1 Brewer and the other people there said. I am  
2 from that area and it makes no sense to me. When  
3 you look at the map, it's just straight except  
4 for our area that's carved out like that. So,  
5 please reconsider. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you. Well, having  
7 no further speakers, I declare this meeting  
8 adjourned and we reconvene on Wednesday.

9 (Whereupon, at 8:56 P.M., the above matter  
10 concluded.)

11

12

13 I, JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, a Notary Public for  
14 and within the State of New York, do hereby  
15 certify that the above is a correct transcription  
16 of my stenographic notes.

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JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, RPR

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