



Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy | [accord.newyork@gmail.com](mailto:accord.newyork@gmail.com) | 718-460-5600

**Statement by the  
Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy to the  
New York City 2012-2013 Districting Commission  
for the Brooklyn Borough's 3<sup>rd</sup> Round Public Hearing  
Delivered by James Hong**

January 10, 2013  
Saint Francis College, Founders Hall Auditorium  
180 Remsen St, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Good evening members and staff of the Districting Commission, Chairman Romano, citizens and residents of Brooklyn. My name is James Hong, I am the Civic Participation Coordinator at the MinKwon Center for Community Action, and I am also speaking on behalf of ACCORD, the Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy.

Our purpose is to advocate for district maps that will keep together communities of interest, and prevent Asian Americans and other racial minorities from being disenfranchised by district boundaries.

We urge the Commissioners to re-examine the districts in Southwest Brooklyn, given that in the December 4<sup>th</sup> Revised Map, Bensonhurst, which is an established Brooklyn neighborhood will be divided between Districts 38, 43, 44 and 47.

In particular, the Unity Map proposed a District 47 that holds together the core of Bensonhurst and would have an Asian population of 35%. Our community has rallied behind the Unity Map. But the Commission has basically ignored it for Southwest Brooklyn.

ACCORD cannot accept the reasons given by the Commission for doing this, and failing to reflect the tremendous concentration and growth of Asian Americans in this area. The Commission stated on November 15<sup>th</sup> when they passed a similar version of this map, that the Unity Map configuration would be "too disruptive;" would not sufficiently protect incumbents; and achieving a concentration of 35% Asian population was not high enough to shape District 47 in this way.

We reject incumbent protection as an acceptable reason for disenfranchising a community. And with regards to the population percentages, it is interesting that District 1, which includes Manhattan's Chinatown, has an Asian population of 35.9%. District 2 has a Hispanic population of less than 20%, but it is expected to continue on as a "Latino" district.

We urge the Commission to again consider the community boundaries of Bensonhurst as submitted by AALDEF: Roughly, bounded by 54<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west, Belt Parkway

on the south, and McDonald Avenue to the east. Population-wise, this configuration is greater than a city council district. And so “Bensonhurst” should easily contain the entirety, if not the great bulk, of a single district.

ACCORD fully supports the efforts of member organization, OCA-NY, in its proposal to the Commission for a modified plan. We defer to Dr. Wah Lee’s testimony for specifics.

We also urge the Commission to have more transparency, and not to repeat the process taken on November 15<sup>th</sup> of last year, when the Commission revealed, then voted on the district plan within minutes – all within the same meeting. Literally no one in the public outside of the individuals at the meeting of the Commissioners had a chance to see how New York City would be divided for the next decade. We believe that the public should know what is going to be voted on by this Commission, as well as have a forum in which the Commissioners can hear what impact their map will have. There must be time for the public to digest, and then to respond to the map, even if it is at the meeting of the Commissioners, and even if the Commission will not necessarily revise the map based on that forum, and will vote on the map as introduced.

Thank you again for considering our testimony. ACCORD has always believed it is in the interests of our city to have a round of hearings after a substantive draft, so we thank you for your continued service.

ACCORD’s members include the following organizations: Asian American Bar Association of New York, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Asian Pacific Americans for Progress New York, Chhaya CDC, Chinese Progressive Association, Indo-Caribbean Alliance, Korean Americans for Political Advancement, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, MinKwon Center for Community Action, OCA-NY, Taking Our Seat, United Chinese Association of Brooklyn, YWCA of Queens and Dr. Carol Huang of Queens, New York.