

Chairman Benito Romano
Executive Director Carl Hum

New York City Districting Commission
253 Broadway, 7th Fl.
New York, NY 10007

As the Council Member representing New York City's 35th District. I would like to thank Chairman Romano, the Members of the Commission, Executive Director Carl Hum and his team for their diligent work and for providing this latest opportunity for myself and the public at large to comment on proposed plans to ensure the best representation for New Yorkers.

I have concerns about the new Councilmanic boundaries proposed by this Commission. The proposed lines oddly move a disparate portion of Bedford-Stuyvesant from the 35th district into the 33rd district. This area is bordered by Nostrand Avenue to the east, DeKalb Avenue to the south, Flushing Avenue to the north, and Classon Avenue to the west.

These blocks are located in the 79th Police Precinct and Community District 3. No other portions of the proposed 33rd Council District overlap with any part of the 79th Precinct or Community District 3. A key objective of the re-districting process should be— whenever possible— to create legislative lines that are coterminous with existing service areas that reflect cohesive neighborhoods. Furthermore, when a small section of a legislative district is located in alternative community districts or police precincts, it typically receives less attention from legislators and their staff.

The residents of this area share common civic associations, community-based organizations, and public educational institutions with the 35th and 36th District, the latter covering the rest of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. Pratt Area Community Council, Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger, Bed-Stuy Community Legal Services Corp., and services at Bed-Stuy Restoration Plaza serve primarily serve residents in the Bed-Stuy (and the nearby Clinton Hill) community. The zoning, housing stock, and commercial corridors in this area are each interconnected with the 35th and 36th Districts, and disconnected from the 33rd District. Moreover, the surrounding community in the 35th District shares many of the challenges facing this geographic section—including shortages in affordable housing and green space, and localized contours of the gentrification process.

The only apparent link between this area and the 33rd District is a growing community of Orthodox Jewish residents. Establishing a separate council district that would primarily affect the Orthodox population actually divides these residents from their longstanding neighbors. Many leaders from the Orthodox community have shared their concerns about this Bed-Stuy area being rolled into a new Councilmanic District, as they seek to have multiple legislative advocates.

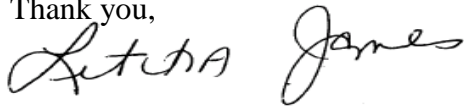
I have hosted numerous community meetings around the development of green spaces and affordable housing that have brought together a diverse of community leaders from the Orthodox community, and the long-standing residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant and nearby Clinton Hill. I

have been able to encourage neighbors in this area to find common ground and work together, at least in part because they have all been constituents in the same district. The newly-proposed lines make this type of community collaboration far less likely to occur.

If this area were to remain in the 35th District, it would require no other changes to the proposed 35th District lines. The population would grow from 152,829 to 165,569. The deviation from the average Council district population would change from -4.9% to +3.1%. Demographically, the newly proposed 35th District would remain a primarily-minority district. More specifically, the breakdown would be 48.2% African-American residents, 13.8% Latino/a residents, 2.7% Asian residents, and 30.7% non-Hispanic white residents. This change maintains the 35th District as a Voting Rights Act District.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and I hope you will consider these matters moving forward.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Letitia James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Letitia James

Member of City Council