



**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 Pre-Map Release Public Hearing  
Delivered by James Hong**

August 13, 2012  
Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, NY

Good afternoon Districting Commission members, staff and concerned citizens of Brooklyn. My name is James Hong and I am speaking on behalf of ACCORD, or the Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy.

ACCORD is a non-partisan, pan-Asian coalition of organizations and individuals committed to advancing the opportunity of Asian Pacific American (APA) and minority communities to meaningfully participate in the political process. ACCORD recognizes that redistricting plays a pivotal and fundamental role in these opportunities, and we support redistricting plans that keep together communities of interest that exist in and around ethnic neighborhoods across New York.

Historically, Asian Pacific Americans in New York City have been, like other minorities, treated unequally by district lines. The growth of the APA population in NYC has dramatically outpaced all other racial groups and now, in 2012, it is imperative that our districts account for the possibility that Asian voters are being disenfranchised by the outdated city council lines.

In Brooklyn, the growth of the APA population is astounding: a **40%** overall increase, and a **46%** increase among the voting age population. There are now over a quarter million APAs in Brooklyn alone. This means around 1 out of 4 APAs in New York City is a resident of Brooklyn. Many of these APA's live in an area that spans from parts of Sunset Park over into much of Bensonhurst.

While the current district lines may have served Southwest Brooklyn in 2002, this part of the borough has changed rapidly and dramatically over the past 10 years. Bensonhurst has become one of the city's most robust Chinatowns, and Sunset Park has become an even greater center of commercial and cultural activity for APAs in Brooklyn. However, these adjacent neighborhoods are divided into at least five different districts (38<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, and 50<sup>th</sup>).

We refer the Commission to the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's *Communities of Interest Survey* and the neighborhood boundaries contained therein. As a member of ACCORD, AALDEF has rigorously solicited input from our member organizations and beyond in drafting these boundaries, and we feel that those in Brooklyn can be especially helpful in informing the Commission's revisions.

These neighborhoods, or portions of these neighborhoods, contain residents sharing economic, social, political, cultural, linguistic, and educational concerns that deserve to be reflected in the results of the redistricting process.

We call on the Districting Commission to uphold the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and consequently, in light of that Act, support district maps that keep together the community of interest that exists either wholly or partly in, though is not limited to, the neighborhoods of Sunset Park and Bensonhurst.

ACCORD supports and recommends the testimony of its member groups with constituencies and history in these areas, and urges the Commission to recognize the community of interest here by drawing lines that do not divide the community, and instead hold together these areas.

Any district lines that dilute voters will undermine not only the political will of certain communities – such lines will undermine the very basis of a democracy.

As you may be aware, there is currently a single majority Asian City Council district. We want to state for the record that there is now enough APA population, in compact and contiguous areas, to support not one but three majority-minority City Council districts, including one in Brooklyn. ACCORD is not advocating nor recommending such districts at this time, but the potential for these districts reveals an incongruity between potential and reality.

ACCORD is a 14-member organization that includes the 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, Queensboro Hill Neighborhood Association, Taking Our Seat, United Chinese Association of Brooklyn, YWCA of Queens and Dr. Carol Huang of Queens, New York.