



**Statement by the
Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy to the
New York City 2012-2013 Districting Commission
for the Manhattan Borough's Pre-Map Release Public Hearing
Delivered by Christina Chang**

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New York Law School, 185 West Broadway, New York, NY 10013

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

ACCORD is a non-partisan, pan-Asian coalition of 14 organizations committed to advancing the opportunity of Asian Pacific American 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.

We are not working in the interests of just one type of Asian American, one borough, or one type of organization. We include organizations involved in housing issues, social services, legal advocacy and community-based organizing, as well as professional associations and civic organizations. In short, we are a broad coalition that has been active since the very beginning of this redistricting cycle, at the state assembly, state senate and congressional levels. We have been recognized as a voice for the Asian American community across the city.

The city charter mandates that district lines preserve communities of interest. ACCORD considers Chinatown and the Lower East Side to share many interests, and so should be considered a community of interest. There are many shared socio-economic and housing characteristics that make these two neighborhoods natural counterparts. However, the current configuration currently joins together the low-income, limited-English, immigrant residents of Chinatown to a vastly different population residing in the financial district, Battery Park City and Tribeca. We recommend re-considering this configuration.

I would also like to address an issue that has been part of the redistricting dialogue for some time. ACCORD's members have been and continue to be concerned about accusations that the efforts of groups such as ours are against "diversity" in districts, and that we encourage "segregation." Nothing is further from the truth. If you think about it, some terribly gerrymandered districts can boast of being the most diverse, simply from the fact that they fracture multiple neighborhoods and so join together a hodge-podge of residents who are "diverse" in quite an unproductive way. On the other hand, a very good district may in fact be rather homogenous. It might cover a large area in which residents share socio-economic characteristics, geographical proximity and also ethnicity. Is this a surprise to anyone? Such ethnic enclaves are a staple of our city, and they are not the product

of anything so insidious as “segregation.” Segregation, let us not forget, was a system of coerced separation. Patterns of migration that result in ethnic neighborhoods is *not* segregation.

Drawing lines that keep together communities of interest will sometimes result in districts with a significant concentration of minority voters. This is representation that will reflect and respect the local presence of minorities.

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, Queensboro Hill Neighborhood Association, Taking Our Seat, United Chinese Association of Brooklyn, YWCA of Queens and Dr. Carol Huang of Queens, New York.