

Good afternoon. My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I serve as representative for the 45th District in the New York City Council, covering the communities of Flatbush, East Flatbush, Flatlands, Midwood and Canarsie. I would like to thank the New York City Districting Commission for allowing me to testify today at the first public hearing of the latest decennial redistricting, as we discuss the initial phases of your work in drafting new legislative maps for the City Council. Special greetings go to Roxanne Persaud, who serves my District with distinction as President of the 69th Precinct Community Council.

First, I would like to commend Mayor Bloomberg, Speaker Quinn, and Black, Latino and Asian Caucus Chairs Cabrera and Jackson for assembling a Commission that reflects the diversity of backgrounds in our city. The redistricting process requires an understanding of the many communities within the five boroughs and the importance of giving every voice proper representation. The fifteen members of the Commission, under the leadership of Chair Roman and Executive Director Hum, possess a breadth and depth of experiences that should serve them well in this process.

With the importance of varied perspectives in mind, I hope the Commission will hire a staff that is as equally diverse as its membership. Their hands-on expertise will be essential to guiding this process, especially since technical details of redistricting will be new to certain members. At this time, it does not seem that the Commission's staff reflects a standard of diversity we should collectively be seeking.

Indeed, diversity should be a top priority at every stage of the redistricting process. This at its core is an exercise in demographics, but on a personal level it is about

protecting and maintaining the voices of common communities. Our government performs best when the range of those voices citywide is reflected by the elected officials who serve and advocate for them.

Political considerations alone cannot be the determinative factor in how the Commission draws the lines. Trust in government was seriously damaged by the state redistricting process this year due to the blatant gerrymandering that Senate Republicans concocted. As an elected official, my personal interests pale in importance to the interests of my constituents, who seek compact and culturally cohesive districts. To further ensure that this is achieved, as well as to eliminate any specter of malfeasance, I call upon the Commission to expand public access to data and technology that will allow everyday New Yorkers to observe the redistricting process and to offer their own input that will offer a more complete picture of how our city has changed over the last ten years.

I also hope that the Commission will properly account for the voice of our incarcerated population. Last December, the State Supreme Court upheld a law that ensures prisoners will be counted in their home communities, not where they are jailed. It seems clear that this decision governs over population counts for both state and city redistricting. Prison-based gerrymandering has been used to artificially dilute the electoral influence of certain communities in the past, but I am confident this Commission will affirm the Court's ruling and the concept of fair representation.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. I am additionally submitting draft maps for the 45th Council District for the record. Please feel free to reach out to me or my office for any and all follow-up as we go forward in this process.