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THE COUNCIL OF
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COUNCIL MEMBER, 8TH DISTRICT

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY DISTRICTING COMMISSION

AUGUST 23, 2012

Good evening members of the New York City Districting Commission. I am Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito and for the past seven years I have represented the 8th Council District, which includes El Barrio/East Harlem, Manhattan Valley and part of the Upper West Side in Manhattan as well as Mott Haven in the Bronx. Central Park, Randall's Island and Wards Island, also form part of my district. While the geographical boundaries of the district are a bit unique (I am one of just a few Council Members whose district goes into more than one borough), I am proud to represent such vibrant, diverse and exciting neighborhoods. I believe that my office has been able to effectively represent all corners of my district. I come before you today to ask that you strongly consider maintaining the current configuration of the 8th Council District.

I understand the concerns expressed by some of my constituents regarding the current district lines, particularly those who reside on the West Side and the Bronx. A majority of my constituents reside in East Harlem (which is also where our District Office is located), but my office has made efforts to be visible and accessible in the Manhattan Valley/Upper West Side area and in Mott Haven. We hold constituent intake hours on every two weeks in Manhattan Valley and in Mott Haven (on Fridays and Tuesdays, respectively) for those who are unable to travel to our District Office. We also sponsor initiatives that stretch across our district, like our Participatory Budgeting project, and work hard to ensure that discretionary budget resources are also allocated evenly throughout the district.

While East Harlem, the West Side and the South Bronx can seem very distinct, there is also a lot in common, particularly in areas like housing. For example, my district includes the largest number of public housing developments in the City of New York. This includes very large developments not only in East Harlem, but in the Manhattan Valley and Mott Haven portions of my district as well.

As the Districting Commission considers re-drawing the City Council boundaries in Manhattan and the Bronx, I would appeal to the Commission to consider leaving Council District 8 in a similar configuration, understanding that there will be some modifications to account for population shifts in neighboring districts. Based on 2010 Census data, my district's population has been roughly static, as it has only grown by 1.9%. I do not

believe that major changes should be made to the district and the three neighborhoods that I represent.

As you know, District 8 was created to be one that serves a primarily Latino constituency, but we are also home to African American, white and a growing number of Asian residents. It is absolutely critical that the district remains a majority Latino district to preserve its “Voting Rights District” status and ensure the protection against the disenfranchisement of our City’s growing Latino population.

I thank all of the members of the Commission for your hard work and commitment to ensuring that we arrive at a fair redistricting plan.