

**Testimony of Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright, 70<sup>th</sup> Assembly District to the New York City Districting Commission  
October 4, 2012**

Thank you, New York City Districting Commission, for allowing me to give testimony as to why it is of the utmost importance that we reconsider the proposed district maps for the New York City Council. As your commission tackles yet another legislative redistricting attempt, it is essential that you work together with the elected officials that understand the needs of these neighborhoods, and with the community members who deserve fair and effective councilmanic representation. In my testimony I will outline why, in upper Manhattan, we must promise a fair and smart redistricting process in order to preserve the unity and progress that has empowered our communities.

As it stands, the new City Council maps do little to bind together communities of interest or to allow the Hispanic and African American population in Upper Manhattan a necessary voice in City government. I support the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Districting Plan, which will effectively maintain political participation and viability. This plan is simple and fair, because it uses community districts as its base. Any changes to existing boundaries were done carefully, are not drastic, and reflect the success that the existing neighborhoods have. The plan adheres to the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, while also protecting the historic and diverse demographics of Upper Manhattan. The plan also grants many of the large institutions contained in the area their own council district, allowing for more focus, better representation and a centralization of resources for both the districts and the institutions.

Perhaps most foolishly, the proposed maps slice through many of Upper Manhattan's most established and well-known neighborhoods, including El Barrio in East Harlem. On the heels of a huge revitalization to El Barrio's famed La Marqueta Mile, this Commission is looking to split the marketplace between districts, neglecting to consider that the site is of economic importance and historically part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Councilmanic district. This type of oversight is careless but avoidable - it would undoubtedly have a devastating effect on our communities.

The maps proposed by the New York City Districting Commission represent an eerie recurrence of the Federal Court's failure to address the needs of Upper Manhattan in the

recent statewide redistricting process. As you move forward in this redistricting, I ask that you familiarize yourself with the needs of these communities, and consider what is at stake if you neglect the existing boundaries and attempt to reshape neighborhoods that have been solidified in the past decade.

Thank you for allowing me to deliver this testimony on behalf of the communities I have dedicated my life and career to representing. I will be glad to answer any questions that you should have at this time.