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August 21, 2012

NYC Districting Commission  
253 Broadway, 7<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Ali Najmi, I'm an attorney and community organizer with SEVA. SEVA is a community based non-profit organization founded and located in Queens. We engage in grass roots organizing to increase civic engagement in immigrant enclaves such as Richmond Hill.

I am here today to urge you to adhere to your duties under the Charter of the City of New York to preserve communities of interest, and rectify the gerrymandering of the Richmond Hill and S. Ozone Park community.

The Richmond Hill and S. Ozone Park community of interest is located between Woodhaven Blvd. to the west, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, Jamaica Avenue to the north and Conduit Avenue to the south. It is a community comprised mostly of immigrants and racial minorities. It boasts one of the largest concentrations of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean Americans in the country. This community shares a common immigration history, family structure, rates of homeownership, school districts and has the same social and economic interests.

Unfortunately, this community is gerrymandered into four Council districts; districts 28, 29, 30 and 32. This is completely unacceptable, and must change. Gerrymandering of this magnitude has consequences on the effective representation of this community. The signs of institutional neglect are too obvious; the demise of Richmond Hill High School, the decay in transportation infrastructure, the absence of local programs for our senior citizens, and the lack of capital investment by the city and state are just some of the struggles of this community. Much of this neglect is the result of gerrymandering. Not even one single district office exists in this community. It's time that this community is united and has a champion for its causes in the City Council.

The creation of a compact and contiguous district that unites the Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park community of interest is all too easy. The boundaries described above are neat boundaries that respect major thoroughfares and natural boundaries. The total population of this area substantially complies with the 160,000 people threshold for a district.

I urge you to make history and unite the Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park community of interest.

Sincerely,

Ali Najmi  
Community Organizer, SEVA