

Statement by John Park, YWCA of Queens

August 21, Queens Redistricting Hearing
Queens Library at Flushing
41-17 Main St.
Flushing, NY 11355

Good afternoon, members of the Commission. I'm the Director of Operations & Community Development at the YWCA of Queens, a nonprofit organization that serves thousands of residents in the Flushing and greater Queens area.

Started in 1978 by 9 immigrant women, the YWCA of Queens has become a service provider of choice in the Flushing area. We are a multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-tiered organization with a focus on putting individuals and families on a path towards personal and economic success. Our Center for children, Center for Youth, Center for Adults, Y Evergreen Care, and Center for Arts and Culture provide comprehensive services for every critical stage of life.

For district lines in Queens, there are a few neighborhoods in that require adjustments and should be corrected with new lines.

Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park is largely considered a single community but is currently split into 4 districts. These should be included in one city council district.

Oakland Gardens near the top of district 23 should be included in district 19.

Some current lines are good and should remain intact, including Flushing where the YWCA of Queens is located. The natural borders of the Van Wyck and Long Island Expressway largely keep the communities whole and should remain this way.

According to the 2010 census, the Asian American population in Queens grew exponentially faster than any other group, which is also true for the entire City and all of NY State. The communities also share very similar needs as immigrants, including things like culturally sensitive and language appropriate support for everything from domestic violence to health care to voting, to bullying in schools.

Back in 1996 when City Council member Julia Harrison represented District 20, which includes this library and is currently represented by Peter Koo, she remarked that the Asian Immigrants in this district was, "an invasion, not assimilation."

We must be cognizant that misperceptions and tensions still exist, that we are in a post 9/11 world, and the issue of how to treat immigrants still divides many parts of our nation.

The community members in Flushing deserve to maintain an undiluted voice to elect someone who doesn't see them as people who are invading, or needing to assimilate, but as constituents who can be the diverse people they are, making Flushing the very unique place in the world that it is.

I hope that you will seriously consider these statements, and also the statements of the other members of the Asian American Community Coalition on Redistricting and Democracy (ACCORD), including our forthcoming recommended maps.

Thank you,

John Park