

In Re City of New York 2022-2023 Districting Commission Queens  
Second Round Public Hearing  
August 16, 2022

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CITY OF NEW YORK 2022-2023 DISTRICTING COMMISSION  
QUEENS PUBLIC HEARING  
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36-01 35th Avenue  
Astoria, New York

DATE: August 16, 2022  
TIME: 5:32 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING in the above-referenced  
matter, held at the above-mentioned time and  
location, before Makeda Edwards, a Notary Public  
of the State of New York.

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A P P E A R A N C E S :

COMMISSIONERS :

DENNIS M. WALCOTT, Chair

YOVAN SAMUEL COLLADO

HON. MARILYN D. GO

KEVIN JOHN HANRATTY

MARIA MATEO

LISA SORIN

MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN

MAF MISBAH UDDIN

KRISTEN JOHNSON

MARC WURZEL

DR. JOHN FLATEAU, Executive Director

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Kindly, we're going to start now. We have a long evening, and we want to make sure that we are respectful to everyone to have an opportunity to testify.

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My name is Dennis Walcott, and I have the honor of being the Chair of this Commission, and while we have several of our commissioners here, others will be joining us virtually. Let me have the commissioners who are here introduce themselves.

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Mark.

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COMMISSIONER WURZEL: Good evening. My name is Mark Wurzel, grew up in Forest Hills, currently live in the Upper East Side.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Maf -- no, no.

COMMISSIONER UDDIN: Yes, my name is Maf Misbah Uddin, representing Queens and the neighborhood. Thank you.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HANRATTY: Kevin Hanratty, I'm from Jackson Heights,

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Queens.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, Kevin.

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And our executive director.

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COMMISSIONER FLATEAU: John Flateau,

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servant of the People.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Welcome John, and

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thank you to the commissioners. I'm not

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sure if we have any commissioners on

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virtually, but we'll bring them on as we

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see them. And before I get to our first

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person to testify, I just want to go

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over a couple of housekeeping things.

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As we know or may know, we have a

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long agenda for this evening, and in

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addition to that, we want to make sure

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we get all the folks in as possible.

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And for those who may have large groups,

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we're kindly and friendly asking if

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you're a large group, if you could

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possibly designate a couple of people to

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testify.

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That may be helpful as well as far

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as allowing others to testify later, but

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hopefully not late, late at night. It's

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up to you, but we are requesting that as well. We will have walk-in testimony being accepted as well, and walk-ins will be called after the preregistered testimony is complete.

And should you decide you want to testify, and say it's getting too late, we will have other hearings in other boroughs where you could testify both in-person, or virtually, as well.

Tomorrow is the hearing in Lehman College, at CUNY New York's auditorium, also from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. Thursday, August 18th, is also from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m., at Staten Island Borough Hall; Sunday, we'll be holding a hearing at Medgar Evers College, and that one will be from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; and Monday, on August 22nd, we'll be at the Schomburg Center For Research and Black Culture, up in Harlem, and that is also from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. So you'll have an opportunity to either be in-person or to testify virtually.

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2           Now, we're at this great museum as a  
3 result of the support and the advocacy  
4 of our local council member who is here  
5 virtually. And she has been just there  
6 in all ways, and just being supportive  
7 of making sure we have access to the  
8 museum, and also able to extend the  
9 hours of the museum; so we could  
10 accommodate those who want to testify  
11 beyond our original close time of 9:00  
12 p.m.

13           She's on the road. I will let you  
14 hear from her as far as where she's at,  
15 but she is representing our city in a  
16 variety of ways, and it's my pleasure to  
17 say, one, a personal thank you to the  
18 council member. Thank you for  
19 everything you've done to allow us to be  
20 here, and your advocacy, and also being  
21 there for your constituents, and it's my  
22 honor to bring on Councilmember Julie  
23 Won. Julie, councilmember.

24           (Applause.)

25           JULIE WON: Thank you so much,

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Commissioner Walcott, as well as the rest of the Redistricting Commission. My name is Julie Won, representing the 26th District, where you currently are sitting or Zooming into, representing Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside and Astoria.

I believe it is not a mistake that currently, I can't be there physically in-person, because as the first Korean-American elected official, Councilmember Linda Lee and I both have been invited to South Korea to meet with the Korean government in the celebration of the Korean Independence Day, as well as other planning to make sure that we are continuing to be representatives of the United States, as well as New York City, as a sister city, too.

For me, I just want to clarify that our testimony that my office, and I have created, is a reflection of what we have heard from the community since the first generation of maps have been released.

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We have heard both from the Manhattan and Roosevelt Island side, as well as on the Queens side, and we have tried our best to follow the Unity Map and have adapted it to make sure that we're meeting every single community member's needs, because we are incredibly engaged and -- we're an incredibly engaged community that is pretty much really like a family.

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And it is also no mistake that you see me in Korea, because this is the first time that we've elected a Korean-American, but also an Asian-American. And we have seen that in the last 2020 census, that the Asian-American population in District 26 has grown by 33 percent, as well as the immigrant population represents more than half, at 60 percent.

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And we know that due to -- according to the latest census, 66 percent of my district has said that they are a representative of people of color. So

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2 first and foremost, according to the  
3 City Charter's criteria, I want to make  
4 sure that we are fighting for fair and  
5 effective representation of racial and  
6 language minority groups protected by  
7 the VRA, and those are Asian-Americans,  
8 Black-Americans, as well as Latin  
9 American -- those of Latin American  
10 descent, and to keeping our communities  
11 of interest intact.

12 So right now, with the first  
13 proposed map from the Redistricting  
14 Commission, I want to point out that it  
15 does opposite of that, and it violates  
16 those two criteria. Our white  
17 population increases from 29 percent to  
18 44 percent, and the Hispanic population  
19 increases from 29 percent -- decreases  
20 from 29 percent to 22 percent.  
21 Asian-American population decreases from  
22 31 percent to 25 percent, and the Black  
23 population decreases 6 percent, to 4  
24 percent. So that means that every  
25 single group protected by the VRA, has

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2 now been decreased in population, and  
3 only the white population has increased.

4 I also want to point out that  
5 according to the latest census, the most  
6 recently proposed map for District 26,  
7 would also double our average income  
8 from about 70 to 80k to 140k to 150k.  
9 So again, I want to reiterate, we go  
10 from mostly a working class people of  
11 color district and 60 percent  
12 foreign-born of immigrants, to a white  
13 district that is predominantly wealthy.  
14 That violates the VRA's -- the City  
15 Charter completely.

16 In addition to the violations for  
17 the first two, I also want to point out  
18 that our district compactness goes from  
19 almost a perfect square to a C shape,  
20 and we're supposed to limit crossover  
21 districts. Yet, we see another addition  
22 of a borough crossover district between  
23 Queens and Manhattan, and we are hearing  
24 very loudly from Community Board 8 on  
25 the Manhattan side, as well as our

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Roosevelt Island neighbors and neighbors on the Upper East Side, that they do not wish to be in a crossover district and would like to remain in Manhattan.

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, as well as Councilmember Julie Menin, Borough President Mark Levine, and former Borough President and now Councilmember Gail Brewer, have all written public letters with each other, saying that they would like the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island to remain in Manhattan and Community Board 2, as well as myself, support this fully, that the borough stays intact in Manhattan, and the borough stays intact in Queens, fully.

And I also want to point out that it is not contiguous. But in order for me to travel to Roosevelt Island or any of my residents to travel to Roosevelt Island, according to the latest preliminary map, I would have to physically leave this district to get to

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the land bridge that is in District 22,  
to get to Roosevelt Island.

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I also want to make sure that it is  
clear that we're supposed to avoid oddly  
shaped districts. And again, we go from  
almost a compact, perfectly square,  
rectangular district, to now a C-shaped  
district; the opposite of what we  
currently have and also violating the  
City Charter's requirements.

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So according to the City Charter and  
looking at our preliminary maps, it is  
very clear that almost every single one  
of the City Charter's criteria has been  
violated by the first preliminary map.  
So we ask you as a district, to not have  
crossover districts between Manhattan  
and Queens, and that you listen to our  
neighbors on both sides, and that our  
Roosevelt and Upper East Side remain in  
Manhattan.

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In addition to that, you will hear  
from multiple community groups, from the  
Filipino-American community, the

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2 Tibetan-American community, the  
3 Nepali-American community, the Colombian  
4 community, the Ecuadorian community, and  
5 there are -- and our Black community,  
6 from the NYCHAs, that are going to plead  
7 with you to make sure that our community  
8 remains in whole. Because when you  
9 fracture them into four different  
10 council districts, then you are  
11 eliminating their ability to advocate,  
12 and effectuate public policy, for public  
13 interest.

14 And by fracturing representation, it  
15 will negatively impact where they  
16 reside, where they live, where they  
17 work, where they worship, and where they  
18 gather. And we do not want the  
19 immigrant community or the Black  
20 community, being divided into multiple  
21 council districts, which you  
22 predominantly see in Woodside.

23 And you will continue to hear from  
24 them in detail of how this is going to  
25 impact their daily lives. But I just

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also want to make sure that it is clear to my entire community in District 26, that I personally am heartbroken, but I have no choice but to lose population as well as land, because I'm 11 -- roughly about 11,000 people over the limit.

And in order for us to do so, we're going to be working closely with you, continuing to listen to the community on where you would like to see district lines be drawn, and we will continue to support that. So the current council map that we are proposing, have been again, an adoption of what the Unity Maps have been, along with our community partners and the non-profits, and faith leaders, who have asked us to support them, to make sure that places of faith or places of worship, their small businesses and places where they gather, like Little Manila, Little Bangladesh, Tibet Way, and all of those other community groups, continue to remain intact together.

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2           Lastly, I want to point out that the  
3 Tibetan-Americans represents a  
4 geopolitically persecuted community, who  
5 have been part of District 26 since the  
6 '90s, when they first seeked asylum here  
7 as refugee seekers. And the largest  
8 Tibetan-American community center for  
9 the country of the United States, is in  
10 Woodside. Tibetan-American community  
11 members predominantly reside in  
12 Sunnyside, Woodside, and have started  
13 their migration from Astoria, as well as  
14 Long Island city. And by cutting them  
15 into four different council districts,  
16 especially in Woodside, it would  
17 completely diminish the political power  
18 that they have been building for the  
19 last twenty years, especially as a  
20 geopolitically persecuted group.

21           So I ask that you would listen  
22 intently to all of the Tibetan-American  
23 community members that will be  
24 testifying, as well as the other  
25 Himalayan community members, like the

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2 Nepalese community, Bhutanese community,  
3 who are also part of the community,  
4 along with so many other immigrants who  
5 make up the district. And if you ask  
6 anybody, immigrant, a person of color or  
7 White, whoever it may be, if you stand  
8 in Sunnyside and you ask them where  
9 Woodside begins, or if you stand in  
10 Woodside and you ask them where  
11 Sunnyside begins, you will start an  
12 outright war, because we are one  
13 community.

14 We refer to ourselves as "the sides"  
15 because there is no side, we are one.  
16 Sunnyside and Woodside must remain  
17 together. That is the end of my  
18 testimony.

19 Oh, and I also want to add that  
20 Blissville is also a huge part of our  
21 community, and we want to make sure that  
22 we all stay together. I recognize that  
23 along the border, because I have to lose  
24 11,000 people, we are going to lose land  
25 somewhere, but I just want to point out

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2 that Blissville has been a beloved part  
3 of this community. They have been  
4 active members on our community board,  
5 as well as just everything from  
6 ecological issues from Newtown Creek.  
7 Their advocacy has been tremendous, and  
8 they are a beloved part of the district.  
9 We would like to continue to remain  
10 intact. So I continue to hope that you  
11 will listen to all of us. And I thank  
12 you so much for your time.

13 (Applause.)

14 CHAIR WALCOTT: Councilmember, thank  
15 you for your testimony, and we  
16 appreciate your virtual presence from  
17 Korea, so thank you, and have a safe  
18 trip, and a productive trip, and  
19 congratulations to both you and  
20 Councilmember Lee, as well. So thank  
21 you very much.

22 A couple more housekeeping pieces  
23 for the audience as well. Just so  
24 you'll know that we have official  
25 transcription taking place, so we have a

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transcriber here, who is taking very  
detailed notes, and that we do take a  
look at them afterwards, and we just  
want you to be aware of that.

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In addition to that, we have other  
commissioners who have joined us. So  
starting with Judge -- Judge, just  
introduce yourself.

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COMMISSIONER MARILYN GO: I'm  
Marilyn Go. I was a -- I'm a retired  
Magistrate Judge and sat in Brooklyn.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, judge.

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COMMISSIONER LISA SORIN: Good  
evening. Lisa Sorin, from the Bronx.

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COMMISSIONER JOVAN COLLADO: Jovan  
Collado, from the Bronx, as well.

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MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Kevin  
Sullivan, Manhattan.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you. I know  
virtually we have Commissioner Johnson.

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COMMISSIONER KRISTEN JOHNSON: Good  
evening, everyone. I'm Kristen Johnson,  
from Brooklyn.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

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I'm not sure if any other members are yet on virtual, but again, I will have them introduce themselves as they join us.

Next, we have Councilmember Nantasha Williams. Councilmember.

The mic is up there, too, right behind Councilmember Holden.

NANTASHA WILLIAMS: Good evening, everybody. Again, I'm Councilmember Nantasha Williams, currently serving the 27th Council District, which encompasses St. Albans, Cambria Heights, Adesleigh Park, Hollis, Queens Village, parts of Springfield Gardens, and Jamaica.

After reviewing the proposed maps that the New York City Districting Commission released, I believe that it would be a disservice to the community to implement these district lines. In the released preliminary map, Rochdale Village is split between two council districts. This historic city within a city, should be kept contiguous in one

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council district. This current separation would disenfranchise this community, currently in Speaker Adams' district, and diminish the powerful voice that exists.

Additionally, the proposal leaves downtown Jamaica out of my council district, District 27. Downtown Jamaica is critical to the 27th Council District, and has historically been a part of the district many, many moons ago, before I even became councilmember.

This would stall so many of the ongoing projects contributing to the revitalization of the Southeast Queens community that I, myself, have been working on since the beginning of my term. I'm following up from the amazing work of my predecessor, Councilmember Miller and Councilmember Comrie and back to Councilmember Spengler.

An example of this is the downtown Jamaica task force that Queens Borough President Donovan Richards and I began.

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This task force is comprised of multiple city agencies, elected officials, businesses and community leaders, all working towards a goal of ensuring a vibrant downtown Jamaica.

Downtown Jamaica is also where most of the assets in the 27th Council District are found. It is the home of Jamaica Center Arts and Learning, the Jamaica Performing Arts Center, we have York College, which is not only a great educational institution, but an amazing community partner. It is also home to new developments, such as the Greater Nexus Coworking Space, that I was incredibly proud to attend the grand opening of.

It is -- the legacy of downtown Jamaica, belongs in the 27th Council District, because it began in this district. Downtown Jamaica is a hub and serves as the connection for thousands of commuters in Southeast Queens, specifically my council

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district.

It is commonly known that Southeast Queens is a transportation desert, and relies heavily on the bus network that is also located in the downtown Jamaica area. The bus terminal in this district, directly serves residents from my district. It is a project that I have been heavily involved in as well, working with MTA and Department of Transportation, because it is in desperate need of repair.

I have been a strong advocate for the downtown Jamaica area and will continue the advocacy for this area. Ensuring that it is unified under the 27th Council District, should be a priority to the Commission. Instead of removing it completely from the district, which the current draft maps do, we actually should be representing more of it, as we did ten years ago, when redistricting happened.

I would like to thank you New York

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2 City Districting Commission. I know  
3 this is really hard work and I commend  
4 you. I am not jealous of you and  
5 appreciate your intention around making  
6 sure this is an equitable process in  
7 your listening ear. I look forward to  
8 listening to the rest of the  
9 testimonies, reading the rest of the  
10 testimonies, and having ongoing  
11 conversations on the redistricting  
12 process. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you,  
14 Councilmember.

15 (Applause.)

16 Next, we'll have Councilmember  
17 Robert Holden. Councilmember.

18 ROBERT HOLDEN: Thank you so much  
19 and again, I'm Councilmember Robert  
20 Holden. I represent, right now, the  
21 30th Council District, which has  
22 constituents in Maspeth, Middle Village,  
23 Glendale, and parts of Woodside and  
24 Woodhaven, and Ridgewood. Thanks --  
25 thanks again for your -- it's a very

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challenging job that you guys have, and I appreciate the undertaking here, and for your willingness to be transparent.

As this process moves forward, I urge you to seriously consider the public testimony you're hearing today, not only from me and other council members, but from civic associations and individuals as well.

Today you'll hear my thoughts on the current draft map, and then I'll offer some solutions to some of the problems I see with the current map, and offer recommendations on what the final lines of the 30 Council District might look like, and should look like.

My testimony is based on what I have been hearing from my constituents and also residents from other council districts, who believe they should be part of the new 30th District moving forward.

As part of my testimony, I have submitted a memo and map detailing my

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proposed lines for the 30th District. The Commission's draft plans splits neighborhoods comprised of 1 and 2-family -- 2-family or 3-family homes, out of the 30th District, and I think that's problematic. Thus, it divides the communities that have the same interest, the same housing stock.

My recommendations for the new 30th, will maintain a consistent housing stock throughout the district, keep natural borders of major highways and boulevards, which is, I think a priority even for the Districting Commission -- I think it's in chapter 50, 51, 52. And you meet the target populations of about 172,000 voters.

The most serious problem with the draft map, is that it exceeds the 30th Council District north of Queens Boulevard, to include parts of Woodside, and remove sections of Glendale. So it kind of splits Glendale up, and we're losing in the 30th Liberty Park, which,

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again, why split the neighbors that have the same housing stock on this other part of the district.

Adding large Woodside apartments also, you know, actually makes the district kind of, you know, we're representing large apartments and then one- and two-family, and that's been a problem for a while. And it splits Woodside -- it splits from itself Woodside and Sunnyside, which have similar housing stock.

So the southern part of the district, Liberty Park, is separated from the rest of Glendale, as I mentioned, and it's added to the 32nd Council, and again, Liberty Park's housing stock is similar to Glendale's housing. So again, why split it up, considering Liberty Park is already in the 30th Council District. And I think they're happy, and their civic associations, police department, community boards, are all tied into the

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30th Council District, it makes sense, more sense, to keep these residents in the new 30th, rather than lumping Liberty Park residents into the same -- into the same council district as the Rockaways, which is very, very far away from there.

So besides removing Liberty Park, the draft line also removes election District 14, the 38th Assembly District, which is Glendale. This ED comprises streets north of Myrtle Avenue, and essentially removes our arbitrary blocks in the heart of Glendale, out of the 30th District. Separating two sections of Glendale out of the 30th District, is frustrating to residents.

This type of arbitrary line drawing is what draws the eye of voters, and ultimately results in the legal challenges that prolongs the redistricting process. The natural border of the 30th District should be Queens Boulevard, not arbitrary streets

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and avenues and sidewalks.

My proposal, which is supported by civic associations and residents, is to keep Glendale united, extend the northern boundary of the 30th Council District to Queens Boulevard, and include the Elmhurst Triangle in the district which, again, I have it in my drawings.

The three corners of the triangle include Grand Avenue and 57th Avenue intersections in the south, the intersection of Woodhaven Boulevard and the LIE in the northeast, and Queens Boulevard and Leland Street in the northwest. This neighborhood is considered Elmhurst. However, the housing stock in the neighborhood, is more reflected of Maspeth, at least in my 30th Council District.

The residents attend -- by the way, this is important, those residents attend the same civic meetings as the Maspeth residents right now. So they

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shop in the same local stores, and their children attend the same schools as Maspeth residents. So, again, please don't split them up.

Including this neighborhood in the 30th Council District will empower these residents to bring them into a greater -- into the greater Maspeth community. Additionally, sections of Rego Park, known as the Crescents, should be considered part of the 30th because, again, it's the same housing stock.

Just as I said, you know about the other neighborhoods, the Rego Park residents are comprised of single-family homes, which makes the housing stock more like Middle Village and less like the rest of the 29th District. So again, that's a suggestion.

It is also important to keep residents who have similar housing, like I mentioned before, in the same council district. The plan I outline, will keep and unite residents who have the same

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interest, same zoning, same civic meetings, and whose children attend the same schools. This includes the new areas of Queens I've identified for expansion. Rather than arbitrary lines to meet population goals, my proposal will have the natural borders that keep communities together.

So again, I just want to -- if you look at my district map, the 30th, it extends from Queens Boulevard all the way down a little to Atlantic Avenue. It's probably one of the longest districts, at least in square miles. If you look at that and then you look at the proposal that where the 30th becomes squarer, it becomes shorter distances and more compact, which I think is the goal.

So I want to thank you, again, for the hard work and the terrific work you're doing on behalf of New York City. We know it's not an easy process. I encourage you to examine my proposals

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and everybody else's, obviously, and really consider the 30th map that I propose to be something that all, I think the neighbors can work with -- around it too. Thank you so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, Councilmember Holden.

Next up is Councilmember Selvena Brooks-Powers, and as she's going up -- and then, we'll go into the public. We have one more councilmember, virtually. Then we'll be going to the general public. Just to let you know, that if you require interpretation services, we have interpretation services provided by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs with us tonight. Please let one of our folks know about that.

Also, I would be remiss if I didn't thank the mayor and his team, the speaker and her team, for all of their help and support about tonight, as well, so thank you.

And Councilmember Brooks-Powers.

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SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS: Good evening. I'm Councilwoman Brooks-Powers, proudly representing District 31, which include Arverne, Brookville, Edgemere, Far Rockaway, Laurelton, parts of Rockaway Beach and Rosedale.

I would like to thank Commissioner Walcott and the entire New York City Districting Commission for granting me this opportunity to testify on behalf of my district, once again, this time in response to the preliminary map. As the map takes shape, we must ensure there is minimal disruption, and that communities of color, specifically Black and brown communities, do not see their voting power marginalized and their voice diminished.

History has shown that redrawing the lines in this way, will dilute Council District 31's voting power and misaligns the community's collective voice. In the state's redistricting process, we

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saw firsthand, historically Black communities; like in the case of Senate District 14, where Queens Village, essentially disenfranchised due to the new lines, were drawn out of the district, and now include other communities of interest and, dilute our voice in government.

I'm here to make sure that doesn't happen in District 31. Southeast Queens, a community predominantly composed of African-American, one- and two-family homeowners, is a community of interest sharing similar ethnic and demographic background that share a unified voice. Southeast Queens encompasses Districts 27, 28, and 31, represented in the City Council by the only three Black elected officials in the entire borough of Queens.

My community wants to ensure that we can maintain our representation for residents and maintain our historic assets, from downtown Jamaica in

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District 27, Rochdale Village in District 28, and JFK Airport in District 31.

I'd like to thank the Commission for listening to the voices of my community by making JFK Airport whole under the 31st Council District, and the preliminary map issued by this Commission here. My communities are most acutely impacted by the flight path of JFK, especially those that live in Rosedale, Springfield Gardens, and Far Rockaway. JFK is nestled in between our communities, and it is important my neighborhoods have one representative that is speaking with a unified voice around issues of noise mitigation and environmental justice.

I think it's also important to note that JFK is represented by one congressional member, one state senator, one assembly member, and should also be represented by one councilmember in the 31st District.

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2 I'd also like to thank the  
3 Commission for ensuring the Hamill's  
4 Houses and Arverne by the Sea, both  
5 remain within the district recognizing  
6 the economic and social contributions  
7 both developments contribute to the  
8 overall district. The Hamill's  
9 development currently is the tail end of  
10 the 31s Council District, and it is  
11 predominantly African-American  
12 population. It anchors our district, it  
13 is one of five NYCHA developments that  
14 exist in the community. It is also a  
15 consolidated NYCHA development with  
16 Carlton Manor Houses, as well.

17 However, the Commission's  
18 preliminary map proposed the cutout  
19 portions of Springfield Gardens, one of  
20 the existing enclaves in my district, a  
21 longstanding District 31 community,  
22 replacing with parts of Ozone Park.

23 It would not only remove the  
24 Springfield Gardens' Church of the  
25 Nazarene, a major institution in my

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district, but also segregate community organizations, such as the Springfield Gardens Taxpayers Association.

We'd like to see Springfield Gardens restored to maintain these connections. They respectfully ask the Commission to consider adopting the map that can be found at [distictr.org/plan/137797](http://distictr.org/plan/137797).

I have hosted a number of public sessions across my district, and have consistently heard the desire to keep the lines the way they currently exist, with an exception of wanting to see JFK Airport wholly within District 31, as the Commission has already proposed in the preliminary map. Residents have also expressed the desire to bring two important assets, that up until ten years ago, was a part of the 31st District, back into the district, which is the Stop&Shop Plaza at Merrick and Springfield Boulevard, and Montebello Park, both in Springfield Gardens.

Additionally, the Rockaway Peninsula

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2 should remain as they currently stand  
3 and not be adjusted. The current  
4 peninsula representation includes a  
5 vibrant Jewish community, several NYCHA  
6 developments, and everything in between.  
7 Developments like Arverne by the Sea,  
8 helps to create generational wealth for  
9 many young Black and brown homeowners.

10 Our communities share similar needs  
11 and rally around many of the same  
12 issues; such as access to emergency  
13 healthcare, which we have a task force  
14 forming right now the digital divide,  
15 illegal dumping in commercial parking  
16 where there currently exists a task  
17 force that started in my district.  
18 Lower property taxes, equitable funding  
19 for our schools, environmental justice,  
20 issues dealing with Jamaica Bay and,  
21 Rockaway Beach, which both are a part of  
22 the district as well, currently and, the  
23 need for better infrastructure, just to  
24 name a few.

25 As stated in my previous testimony,

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redrawing our lines -- redrawing our lines should not dilute our voting power or weaken our voice. It is vitally important that my district remains intact and include the Stop&Shop Plaza and all of JFK Airport.

We need districts that unify our communities together, strengthen our voices and ensure upward economic mobility.

I appreciate all of the work the commissioners have invested to date, and urge the Commission to keep these issues in mind as you continue your work. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, Councilmember.

(Applause.)

We have one more council official, and then we'll get to the audience, and the next councilmember virtually, Councilmember Ariola.

Councilmember.

Is the councilmember available?

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MS. ARIOLA: Yes.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Oh, there you are.

JOANE ARIOLA: Yes, I am.

My name is Joane Ariola, and I'm the councilmember for District 32 in Queens. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the preliminary redistricting maps released by the Districting Committee, that will directly affect the residents of District 32.

District 32 has always been a district rich in cultural diversity. Immigrants from across the world have called it home, and over the course of many decades, have opened their business here. From Ireland to Guyana, you can find every culture, race, and religion in our district. When one looks at the racial diversity ratio of the two community boards within the district that have sizable areas located on the mainland portion of Council District 32, you will note that they have been

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2 described as among the community board's  
3 district's most diverse community board  
4 districts in this borough.

5 Over the course of decades, Council  
6 District 32's composition has ensured  
7 that it reflects all sorts of good  
8 government groups across the nation,  
9 they should be the ultimate goal or  
10 reapportionment, competitive districts  
11 where no single political party has a  
12 gerrymandering advantage. Over the  
13 course of decades, residents of District  
14 32 have been represented by persons of  
15 different parties along the way.  
16 Pre-1993, it was represented by  
17 democrats, from '93 to 2001, a  
18 republican, who was followed by a  
19 democrat, who was followed by a  
20 republican. It's a competitive  
21 district, which is a good thing, from  
22 the prospective that people who reside  
23 in the district evaluate and elect  
24 candidates based on their views, a  
25 candidate's strength, and their ability

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to work to address issues and concerns  
in a matter beyond just party politics.

The retail strips within the  
district have people from all parts of  
the district shopping in them, no matter  
which part of the district people reside  
in. Our children may live in one part  
of the district, but attend school,  
whether public or parochial, in another  
part of the district. The same is true  
of all the diverse religious  
institutions across the district, people  
often live in one part of the district  
yet, worship in another. Youth groups  
and sports leagues also draw their  
participants from all parts of the  
district.

As adjustments are considered to the  
proposed map for Council District 32, I  
would urge that you evaluate how better  
to keep communities of interest intact  
from a perspective of common interests  
and concerns. For example, East  
Glendale and Woodhaven share similar

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2 transportation interests, as Woodhaven  
3 Boulevard is the corridor that runs  
4 through both and, one of the city's  
5 flagship parks. But both neighborhoods  
6 and, the needs and concerns would be  
7 better addressed from a governmental  
8 standpoint, if both were in District 32.  
9 Adding East Glendale to the district as  
10 opposed to Liberty Park, would make the  
11 district more compact and more  
12 contiguous.

13 The neighborhoods of Woodhaven and  
14 the eastern portion of Glendale are  
15 connected by Woodhaven, versus  
16 neighborhoods of Woodhaven and Liberty  
17 Park, which are separated by Forest  
18 Park, and would isolate Liberty Park and  
19 the Ridgewood portion, currently  
20 included in the proposed District 32 map  
21 from the rest of the district.

22 Under the current map, one would  
23 literally have to pass through District  
24 30 or Brooklyn, to get to Liberty Park  
25 Ridgewood piece of the proposed 32nd

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2 Council District map. The two  
3 communities share a common bus and  
4 driving route and the traffic problems  
5 associated with it. Both neighborhoods  
6 would be affected by proposed Queens  
7 Link Greenway and the Rockaway Beach  
8 Line reactivation and, both are  
9 underserved by public transportation and  
10 have a common interest in seeing north  
11 to south transportation options  
12 improved.

13 Another example would be retaining  
14 the South, the area in South Ozone Park,  
15 south of Rockaway Boulevard, that is  
16 currently in Council District 32 between  
17 114th Street and Lefferts Boulevard.  
18 Community concerns, housing stock  
19 density and the diverse area are far  
20 more similar to Howard Beach, than to  
21 areas north of Rockaway Boulevard.  
22 Transportation, sanitation, policing and  
23 many other city issues are also similar.

24 I urge that you consider the common  
25 interests regarding the two examples

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I've mentioned when considering the lines that will define Council District 32. I thank you for your time, your hard work, willingness to listen, and time to present.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, councilmember, for your testimony.

Now, we'll go down the list and we'll start with -- is it Emilia Decaudin.

EMILIA DECAUDIN: Hello and good evening. My name is Emilia Decaudin. I am the state committee member and district leader for Assembly District 37, which includes Long Island City, Hunters Point, Sunnyside and Ridgewood.

I'm testifying today against the current proposed plan for Council District 26 and the surrounding districts, in part for a lot of the reasons that Councilmember Won stated. But I want to restate some of those in my own words, to really give folks a clear picture of what it means for

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2 communities of interest, like Woodside  
3 and other places, to be cut apart.

4 When you're an advocate and an  
5 activist, or just someone whose life is  
6 impacted by the choices made by people  
7 in government, either your council  
8 members or the agencies ran by the city  
9 or other state agencies that your  
10 council members are appealing to, it's a  
11 lot of work. I know that a lot of  
12 commissioners here have done that kind  
13 of work and so you understand what goes  
14 in it. And when you're in a position  
15 where the kind of issue that you're  
16 trying to advocate for is directly  
17 making your life more difficult, that's  
18 directly contributing to a community's  
19 marginalization, the simple fact of the  
20 matter is that having to talk to  
21 multiple people, multiple council  
22 members to get the issue resolved, it  
23 goes from being -- multiplying from one  
24 to two, to three, to growing  
25 exponentially difficulty, like ten,

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twenty and thirty.

Having to spread your efforts across multiple members, increases the likelihood that the departments that you're going to be speaking to, whether that's DOT or HPD or whatever agency you're trying to get your councilmember to advocate upon, is going to be more likely to run around the bush and delay or deflect to other people for responsibility, simply because it's easier to do so in responsibility and things like that.

Keeping our neighborhoods together is not just a metaphysical or abstract issue, it directly leads to different outcomes when it comes to performing on the advocacy. On the level of the councilmember themselves, it also makes it more difficult for them to do their jobs when it comes to advocating for specific neighborhoods to those different agencies, as well as trying to get resources for institutions within

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those neighborhoods.

We saw from the council members' testimony, that the average income of this district is going to increase, the average number of hospitals in the district is going to increase, even though they're all entirely -- almost entirely located on the Manhattan side. And those statistics are directly used when it comes to how funding is distributed to different districts, and to different council members' budgets. And having those two disparate communities, you know, those parts in Manhattan that actually decided to bite around this district and around Roosevelt Island today, before giving my testimony to better understand the geography at play.

And Roosevelt Island is a nice place, but it's very different from the communities that are currently, represented in the District 26. And combining those two communities,

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Sunnyside, Woodside, parts of Woodside and Long Island City with those parts of Roosevelt Island and the Upper East Side, is going to have a detrimental effect -- detrimental effects on the ability of those constituents to advocate for themselves and for the councilmember to do their jobs.

So I would ask that when coming up with the next proposed draft, that you limit the amount of cross-borough, you know, cross river districts that are there, and keep Woodside especially together. Thank you.

MR. WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Next is James Hong. Is James Hong here?

JAMES HONG: Good evening, thank you for your service in this redistricting process. My name is James Hong. I'm here as a concerned citizen, and I'd like to talk about District 20 and 26. I'm a resident of Flushing, and I've

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2 lived in Woodside for close to a decade,  
3 ending in 2020. About District 20, the  
4 draft map, unfortunately, divides  
5 Flushing, that's the -- yeah, divides  
6 Flushing through Murray Hill, which is  
7 the center of Flushing's vibrant  
8 Korean-American community. This is  
9 where Korean New Yorkers live, work,  
10 eat, shop, sing karaoke.

11 If you've ever driven or taken a bus  
12 down Northern Boulevard, there's not a  
13 block between Flushing and Bayside where  
14 you won't see a Korean restaurant,  
15 retail business or church. Northern  
16 Boulevard is a thoroughfare, and it  
17 shouldn't be used as a boundary,  
18 especially in Murray Hill, but that is  
19 exactly what is happening now in the  
20 draft maps and also in the current map.

21 So I'd like to ask that you please  
22 move the northern boundary for District  
23 20 further north, so that the district  
24 doesn't divide Flushing, and includes  
25 all of what's considered Flushing,

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including Murray Hill. So please keep  
Flushing whole, use 20th Avenue or  
Willets Point Boulevard meeting Francis  
Lewis Boulevard, as northern edge of  
District 20.

Now, the place to shed population in  
District 20, is the eastern, sort of  
foot, of the district that juts into  
Auburndale and Bayside. The way it is  
right now, it doesn't make a lot of  
sense. If you look at the boundaries of  
the community boards, the police  
precincts and the school districts of  
Northeast Queens, none of them join  
Flushing with Auburndale across Utopia  
Parkway.

Those who have grown up their whole  
lives in Northeast Queens, can  
intuitively identify that Utopia Parkway  
is where Flushing ends. District 20  
should also end at Utopia.

Just for the record, I believe we  
should keep the Van Wyck and LIE as the  
western and southern boundaries of

1  
2 District 20. And I also wanted to just  
3 comment on District 26, Western Queens,  
4 Woodside, really belongs with Sunnyside  
5 and Long Island City within District 26.  
6 The draft maps splits Woodside up badly  
7 and it's joined with Maspeth, which has  
8 dramatically different politics,  
9 transportation demographics. This  
10 coupled with other big changes in LIC,  
11 radically shifts District 26's racial  
12 composition.

13 Around 10,000 Asian-Americans will  
14 lose representation by the first  
15 Korean-American in the City Council, and  
16 the draft map threatens the ability of  
17 the remaining Asian-Americans in that  
18 district to elect a candidate of their  
19 choice. Basically, this is a very  
20 anti-Asian change to District 26 and I  
21 urge you to reject it.

22 (Applause.)

23 In closing, I won't recap on  
24 everything that I said, but I do want to  
25 touch on the prioritization of Staten

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Island. While I respect Staten Islanders' hopes in keeping their 3rd district from having any part of Brooklyn, it shouldn't be done to the detriment of the other 94 percent of New York City's population, and I urge you to reconsider that change. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Next will be -- is it Tenzin Zheng (phonetic.)

TENZIN ZHENG: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Tenzin Zheng, I live in Woodside, District 26. I'm a Tibetan, and I'm testifying in interest of the Tibetan community. 63 years ago, our ancestors were forced out of our home country, Tibet, when our people were massacred, our religion and cultural institution were just wiped into ashes.

Since then, our people continue to experience genocide of our cultural

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2 language and identity. Fortunately,  
3 with the passage of the Immigrant Act of  
4 1990, we were able to immigrate and we  
5 resettled in Astoria, Long Island City,  
6 Woodside and Sunnyside. The Tibetan  
7 community in New York City are made of  
8 Tibetans from Tibet, asylum seekers,  
9 refugees from India, Nepal and Bhutan.  
10 We're also Tibetan-American born  
11 Tibetans here. For over 30 years, the  
12 Tibetan community has made a unified --  
13 has been a unified part of Council  
14 District 26, with experiencing multiple  
15 challenges like language and cultural  
16 barriers, navigating the ways of this  
17 country.

18 With limited resources and doing the  
19 oddest jobs in this country, we thrive  
20 to remain in a cluster within District  
21 26, and we were able to preserve our  
22 language and identity that continues to  
23 face genocide.

24 Today, we are well over 15,000  
25 Tibetans in District 26, mostly in

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2 Sunnyside and Woodside. District 26 is  
3 now our new home, our newfound home, and  
4 we have built a community center at 5712  
5 32nd Avenue in Woodside, and we also  
6 have a street in front of that community  
7 center named Tibetan Way. And we also  
8 gather here at the Tibetan Community  
9 Center. That is the largest non-profit  
10 organization in -- Tibetan non-profit  
11 organization in North American, and we  
12 gather here for cultural celebrations,  
13 spiritual gatherings, and for the first  
14 time ever in these thirty years, after  
15 facing multiple challenges, we were able  
16 to have the first Tibetan-speaking women  
17 working in council, City Council.

18 For the first time ever, we were  
19 able to provide and receive resources in  
20 Tibetan language for this community. We  
21 never found resources in any Tibetan  
22 language, in any government agencies,  
23 any other council districts ever, so  
24 far.

25 For the first time, we have two

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2 Tibetan-speaking Americans as community  
3 members, and that is the progress that  
4 we have recently made after ourselves  
5 represented fairly and effectively in  
6 this district. It is very, very  
7 disheartening to see this new map  
8 proposal, which takes Woodside out of --  
9 separate part of -- Sunnyside and  
10 divided into multiple council districts.

11 I just want to urge the  
12 commissioners here, please do not  
13 disempower us on this progress that we  
14 have just began to make. In addition, I  
15 want to say that we want to stay with  
16 the over 3000 Tibetan community members  
17 who are in Sunnyside and Woodside, the  
18 Nepalese, the Bhutanese and our  
19 Himalayans. We share over twelve  
20 thousand spiritual connections, and we  
21 want to stay together with other Asians  
22 like Filipinos, like our Korean members  
23 together.

24 So if divided into four districts  
25 like the new map proposed, it would

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2           disrupt the continuity of services that  
3           we just started to receive, the flow of  
4           resources for the Tibetan Community  
5           Center that we just began to receive,  
6           and further anticipate developers taking  
7           advantage of Woodside. And if it gets  
8           divided into multiple council districts,  
9           that will add on to vulnerability of our  
10          immigrant communities, and it will  
11          further displace us.

12                 I strongly recommend, and I urge  
13                 that Woodside stays together with Long  
14                 Island City, Sunnyside and Western  
15                 Astoria, like it has been for the last  
16                 thirty years, and please do not displace  
17                 us again. Thank you.

18                         CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
19                         testimony.

20                         Next, we will have Michael Nessbaum,  
21                         and then, Essence Scott, and then we'll  
22                         go from there to virtual testimony.  
23                         Then, we'll come back to in-person  
24                         testimony. Michael Nessbaum and Essence  
25                         Scott, please.

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2           MICHAEL NESSBAUM: Thank you,  
3 Chairman Walcott. It's good to see you  
4 and Mr. Hanratty, you are from Queens  
5 here. I'm representing the Jewish  
6 Community Relations Council. I'm also  
7 the president of the Queens Jewish  
8 Community Council, and I've been around  
9 this game for well over 50 years, and  
10 it's refreshing, finally, that New York  
11 City is looking at redistricting based  
12 on ethnicity and communities, not  
13 whether or not there is a D and an R,  
14 and an I or a C, where people draw  
15 lines.

16           Queens is unique, as many of you  
17 know. We're the only borough that we  
18 recognize our neighbors and our  
19 neighborhoods when we write a letter.  
20 No one here writes just Queens, New  
21 York. We relate to the neighborhoods  
22 and you're hearing it today.

23           (Applause.)

24           You don't hear Brooklyn saying I'm  
25 in Cobble Hill or the East Side, I'm in

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Murray Hill. They write New York and Brooklyn, the Bronx, etcetera, and Staten Island. Queens is unique, and I don't envy your task in trying to come up with the district lines here, but it's refreshing that the ethnicity issues, the neighborhood issues, are the priority.

On behalf of the Jewish community, we are concerned. We are a minority, we are not categorized as the feds have in terms of race. There is no division in dividing on civil rights on religion, but in District 24, there is a paramount issue about dividing a community on religion. So we're asking, and on behalf of the Jewish Community Council and others, we have submitted and will be continuing to submit a map that will be inclusive of Districts in 24, that I think deserve to be put in.

We've looked at the numbers. The numbers are reflected within a margin of less than 4 percent of the current

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2 district, which is a little bit under  
3 167,000. We are not a majority of  
4 Jewish communities, but we're spread out  
5 within the 24th District, concentrated  
6 in Kew Garden Hills, Utopia, Hillcrest  
7 and Fresh Meadows. We're also cognizant  
8 of our neighboring council people in  
9 terms of the south and in the east. We  
10 have African-American in the south, and  
11 we have Asian-American in the east, and  
12 we have the same in the north.

13 We are looking to include the Cedar  
14 Grove area, which happens to be  
15 Asian-American. We're looking to  
16 include the Hillcrest area, but most  
17 prominently, we're looking to make sure  
18 that the division in the east, when it  
19 comes to the Utopia/Fresh Meadows area,  
20 is not divided, because we have  
21 synagogues and communities that have now  
22 divided, where congregants are going to  
23 be in two separate council districts.  
24 And we all know -- as everyone here  
25 knows, ethnicity is important. Your

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community is important.

Queens speaks over three hundred different languages. You can't draw lines to accommodate every single ethnic group and religious group in this City of New York. You have to take into a certain degree, the politics, but more important, you got to maintain neighborhoods. As Councilman Holden said, he believes you got to follow the structures of the buildings in the neighborhood. I feel you got to follow the structures of the communities, where they live, where they work, where they get their education, and where they pray. And I hope, and I understand when you look at our maps from the 24th, you'll see that. But as a Jewish leader in that particular district, they've elected in the past and, again, an Italian-American.

So it's not ethnicity that determines who your representative is, it is the quality of that individual to

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represent you, and most of the council people in Queens, are lucky enough to have communities that understand quality. And, to respect this quality, priority is paramount, and I hope that you take into account when dividing particularly the 24th district. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

Essence Scott. Is Essence Scott -- if not, then we will go virtual.

Is it Zelema Blair, virtually Zelema Blair?

If not, the next virtual will be Russell Squire (phonetic). Russell Squire. Zelema, I see her name.

Zelema Blair?

DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: Yes.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, we can hear you now, you're up.

DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: Oh, I am. I don't -- I'm here.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Yes, do you have  
testimony?

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DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: I do.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay. It's your  
turn to testimony.

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DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: I don't know if  
you can see me.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: We cannot, but we  
can hear you clearly.

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DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: Oh, yes. You  
could see me now.

12

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Now, we can.

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DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: Hi, good evening  
everyone, and thank you for having me.  
And so my name is Dr. Zulema Blair. I  
am chair of the Department of Public  
Administration at Medgar Evers College,  
and the redistricting research director  
at the Center for Law and Social  
Justice.

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The Center for Law and Social  
Justice is part of the Unity Map  
coalition, and the Unity Map coalition  
represents Asian-American Legal Defense

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2 Fund for Law and Social Justice and  
3 Latino Justice, and so we want to make  
4 sure that -- that it's a clear  
5 understanding that 51 districts were  
6 drawn, and that we did, to the best of  
7 our ability, to represent the Voting  
8 Rights Act. And so in doing so, that we  
9 represented racial and language  
10 minorities to the best extent possible.  
11 And why that's important, is because  
12 while we can't make everyone happy with  
13 the boundaries, we do the best that we  
14 can to make sure that each community of  
15 interest is able to elect their  
16 candidates of choice.

17 So for example, in the Bronx, where  
18 for years, Wakefield have been crap, we  
19 made sure and, we're glad that the  
20 Commission was able to do so, that the  
21 Northern Bronx is kept whole. However,  
22 Central Bronx that represents  
23 communities of interest of people of  
24 African descent, are not as whole, and  
25 we want to make sure that it's done in a

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way that it represents the growth as we move forward to 2030. So please keep that in mind.

In Brooklyn, District 41, so we need changes there, because in District 41 and 37, we need to make sure Ocean Hill is kept whole. There's a lot of history in Ocean Hill, and it's the history that keeps the communities of interest together. And if you don't know the history of Ocean Hill, you should know. So Ocean Hill is very important to people of African descent -- connects with Brownsville. And we want to make sure that that's kept whole, so that, again, we preserve those districts.

With some of the loss of the population in the Southeast Brooklyn communities, it is important -- and in central Brooklyn, it is important that you keep communities as whole, and neighborhoods as whole as possible. So take 35 and 36 -- Districts 35 and 36, for example, I don't know if it's

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beneficial to keep everything the same. Yes, everyone says keep everything the same and we want everything the same and everything is hunky-dory; yes, we get it. But then, down the line, you lose a district. How long can District 35 be sustainable if some of Crown Heights is not reunited with Prospect Heights?

Prospect Heights, although it seems totally gentrified, has, in the words of a community leader, has legacy for families for people of African descent, and we want to make sure that District 35 is kept on in a way that the plurality is able to continue to elect the candidate of its choice.

So you need to connect an economic development institution that is able to blend those tale of two districts together from the northern end of Farragut, to the southern end in Crown Heights, in Prospect Heights. And the way to do that, is to take a little bit of Crown Heights from District 36, to

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make sure that both can be kept whole,  
okay. 36 will always be whole, but we  
need to make sure that 35 and 36 are  
preserved through 2030, because if  
not --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Councilmember, if  
you could wrap up, please.

DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: Yes.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, thank you.

MS. BLAIR: Yeah, I'm going to wrap  
up soon.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, thank you.

DR. ZULEMA BLAIR: And then,  
District 46 -- District 46, we need to  
make sure that the Flatlands line is  
respected to keep Canarsie whole, do not  
crack Canarsie. We did a lot of work,  
the last time, to make sure District 46  
was put together and they were able to  
elect the candidate of their choice.  
And District 49 -- 45, needs an  
institution in this district, so that  
they can continue to elect a candidate  
and do the work that it needs to do for

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the residents. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you very much for your testimony.

(Applause.)

Next, we have Russell Squire virtually, Russel Squire.

Is Russel Squire there?

Is Russel there?

If not, we'll need a translator for Bangla. Next, is Jasmine Ahmed, that's virtual.

All right, I'll go on.

Next is Kevin -- Kevin Livingston. Kevin Livingston, virtually.

If not, virtually Barry Schneider. Barry Schneider.

BARRY SCHNEIDER: That's me, sir.

CHAIR WALCOTT: That is you then. Yes, your turn to testify.

BARRY SCHNEIDER: That's me, sir. Here I am. My name Barry Schneider and I'm president of the --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hold on. We're getting feedback. Can you hold on one

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second, sir? I'm not sure -- do you have anything on or is someone on that's not on mute?

BARRY SCHNEIDER: I just turned it off. It was me, sorry.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, fine. You're up again.

BARRY SCHNEIDER: Let's start again. Commissioners, my name is Barry Schneider and I'm the president of the East 60th Neighborhood Association. You're going to hear now several different perspectives from someone on the other side of the river.

I just -- I speak today to ask, of the district lines proposed, the Queens Council District 26, the Manhattan Council District 5, which includes portions of the Sutton Place, the Upper East Side, and all of Roosevelt Island, not be adopted for the following reasons:

First, the draft proposal violates four of the criteria outlined in the

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2 City Charter Section 52, 1C, D and E,  
3 and I did memorize that. And Section  
4 52.2, the violation of these criteria  
5 results in districts where one  
6 neighborhood and communities of interest  
7 are not kept intact, the proposed  
8 district is not compact, the proposed  
9 district results in an extreme crossover  
10 district, and the proposed district is  
11 very oddly shaped.

12 Further, the proposed redistricting  
13 of the eastern most portion of the  
14 section of Manhattan Island become part  
15 of Queens, ignores the very many  
16 communities of interest that would be  
17 affected, a river runs through it.  
18 There are several well-established  
19 neighborhood associations whose members  
20 shouldn't be torn asunder, a number of  
21 neighborhood schools and several beloved  
22 parks will be broken apart, a river runs  
23 through it. Bedpost Alley, whose  
24 personnel live in CD 5, will in the  
25 future, be represented by a

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councilmember on the other side of the East River in Queens, and Councilman Manik but apportionment, would be very well shortchanged.

Those sections on the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island, would no longer be an integral part of the rest of the Upper East Side. I strongly urge the City Districting Commission to reconsider this ill-conceived plan and not divide, but keep all, an indivisible and cohesive neighborhood. Thank you very much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Next is Judith Schneider.

BARRY SCHNEIDER: She'll be right with you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: All you have to do is slide the camera along, that's all.

BARRY SCHNEIDER: Well, she has her own computer.

JUDITH SCHNEIDER: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Judy

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Schneider and I am co-chair of the Park's Committee of Community Board 8M. But I am not speaking as a representative of Community Board 8 Manhattan, I am speaking as an individual.

My first comment is the draft proposal for Manhattan and Roosevelt Island violates four of the criteria outlined in the City Charter Section 52(1) 1C, D and E, and 52(2). The violation of these criteria, are distinct and cannot be said enough. Neighborhoods and communities of interest, are not kept intact, such as Roosevelt Island and Manhattan and will be torn apart by a river. The proposed district is not compact. The proposed district results in extreme crossover district and the proposed districts are very oddly shaped. To quote the Executive Director of the Commission, Mr. John Flateau, when he talked about Staten Island, "Keeping Staten Island

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together in order not to mess up  
Brooklyn." How about keeping Manhattan  
together in order not to mess up Queens?  
(Applause).

My second comment is about our  
parks. Community District 8M ranks 47th  
out of 51 council districts for the  
least amount of park space in New York  
City. By carrying out this plan, we  
would lose the Esplanade and Andrew  
Haswell Green Park, phase three, which  
has not yet been started to be built.  
It will probably take a minimum of \$25  
million to build. The Esplanade needs  
and incalculable amount of money for  
repairs. Will a councilmember in  
Community District 26 Queens spend that  
kind of money in Manhattan? Remember,  
Roosevelt Island and Manhattan only  
represent 27 percent of the voters in  
Council District 26 Queens, or will most  
of the members' funds be spent in  
Queens? That question also applies to  
our schools, our libraries, all our city

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services that need additional money, as well as participatory budgeting.

Commissioners, Community Board 8 Manhattan has made a plan and submitted it to the Commission to keep our district whole and taking into account the population in each district. Please take a good look at this plan and implement it. Thank you for listening to my testimony.

(Applause).

I'm sure when you hear from Russell Squire, he will talk to you about the plan, as he is our chair. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony, much appreciated.

Next up is Kevin Livingston.

Kevin Livingston?

We'll go to the next one. Jennifer Barratta, on Zoom. Jennifer Barratta? That is not here. That is one of our Commissioners. Hi, Commissioner.

Next we call --

KEVIN LIVINGSTON: Good afternoon,

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Kevin Livingston here.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Yes, sir. You're up, sir.

Kevin Livingston, your time is up for testimony.

KEVIN, LIVINGSTON: Good afternoon, how are you doing? Thank you so much for taking me. My name is Kevin Livingston, I'm a lifelong resident of Southeast Queens. Please forgive me, I'm running around.

First, I would like to say, thank you for convening this here meeting, which is very important to our community. I am born and raised in Southeast Queens, 44 years. In particular, the areas of Laurelton and Springfield Gardens.

I want to first thank you for looking at the new redistricting map and keeping JFK in the 31st District.

I would ask that you would bring back Springfield Gardens, return that to the 31st. Through the representation of

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the leadership that we had there, it just shows from our current councilmember and prior, how they loved and hugged on the community. We want to keep that intact.

Additionally, with the proposed maps, in terms of splitting Rochdale Village, I would like to put a vote to keep Rochdale Village together. It truly is the jewel of Jamaica, and I feel like it will be splitting up resources. But again, I really hope that we keep the 31st district intact the way it is right now, in particular, again, keeping JFK in the 31st and also bringing back Springfield Gardens to that district. It is represented well.

Our current council and elected council know the community well, and I just feel like it would be a disjustice to remove that from the 31st district. We have a lot of resources here. We have to keep those resources in our communities.

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(Applause)

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

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Jennifer Baratta, virtually.

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Jennifer Baratta? We'll come back.

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Lori Goodman? Okay.

7

Is it Alexandria Zuraski? And next

8

will be Francie Scanlon, virtually.

9

I'll try one more time. I know I

10

heard Jennifer Baratta is here,

11

virtually here.

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We're going to go back to in-person,

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and next in-person would be Annie

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Forduce. Is Annie Forduce here? This

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is in-person. And then after Annie, we

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will have Nofar Raheim (phonetic), and

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then following Nofar, we have Jafar

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Forduce (phonetic).

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So Annie Forduce, Nofar Raheim and

20

Jafar Forduce.

21

So if the other two individuals

22

would like to come down as well, that

23

way you could follow, and someone will

24

move you up --

25

ANNIE FORDUCE: Thank you. Hi, I'm

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Annie Forduce. I'm testifying for District 26. I am one of the founder and artistic director of Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts, BIPA. BIPA is a community organization that offers weekend arts and cultural programs in Bengali language, for Bangladeshi children.

We have been running our programs for the last 30 years in Woodside, Long Island City, Sunnyside, and other neighboring areas.

This is our little Bangladesh where we grew up together. We stayed together with the other Asian community, to build political and community power. We celebrate our social and cultural identities in many different ways. We made friends with many other organizations that are situated in this area.

If this district is divided into four different parts as proposed, we are going to lose all these cultural and

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social power. We are certain that we'll lose many community services, especially the need of the language assistance that we are receiving now.

Our council office provides for the immigrants. The council office -- our council office provides immigrants many opportunities and services that we don't want to lose for the new proposed district. Our political power and cultural identity depends on the unity, and we already -- that we already built in last twenty years. We need to keep it as it is.

I strongly recommend making sure Woodside stays together with Long Island City, Sunnyside, and Western Astoria, as it has been in the last thirty years that I have seen. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony. Is it Nofar Rahiem?

If not, it's Jafar Forduce. And Lara Gregory. It would be Lara Gregory, Sharon Pope-Marshall, and then Frankie

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Korea.

CHAIR WALCOTT: So, Lara Gregory?  
Okay.

SHARON POPE-MARSHALL: I'm Sharon  
Pope-Marshall. Thank you for your  
patience. My name is Sharon  
Pope-Marshall, and I'm the executive  
director of CIVITAS. For over forty  
years, we've advocated for sound  
context, sensitive urban planning,  
zoning, waterfront and land use  
policies, to improve neighborhood  
quality of life in El Barrio East  
Harlem, and on the Upper East Side,  
which are in Manhattan Council District  
5.

Thank you, Commissioners. We really  
appreciate your service. And thank you  
for this opportunity to testify against  
carving out approximately fifty blocks,  
portions of Sutton Place, the Upper East  
Side, and all of Roosevelt Island, from  
Council District 5. Those  
Manhattan-based communities would be

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2 incorporated into a Queens Council  
3 District. Each of our Council District  
4 5 neighborhoods are economically,  
5 politically, and socially connected.

6 We would be unable to stand united  
7 to address issues of mutual concern, and  
8 -- such as participatory budgeting,  
9 congestion pricing and other public  
10 policy issues. I should note as well,  
11 that the City Council has power over the  
12 City's \$100 billion budget and votes on  
13 municipal service delivery, land use,  
14 affordable housing, economic  
15 development, investment and other  
16 community initiatives.

17 Our unified voice, if the carve out  
18 is indeed ratified, would be  
19 substantially diminished to be  
20 subordinated by and subsumed with  
21 neighboring Queens community concerns,  
22 that may not impact us. And of course,  
23 Roosevelt Island, in particular, has  
24 been geopolitically linked with the  
25 Upper East Side since its inception as a

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residential community. The Roosevelt Island Tramway is based on the Upper East Side.

Moreover, as was explained earlier, the proposed council district is not compact and would result in an unnecessary borough crossover that is logistically oddly shaped. And most importantly, neighborhoods of common interests and concerns, would not be kept intact. All are violations of criteria as set forth in the City Charter for determining City Council boundaries. CIVITAS opposes this disruption of the integrity of City Council District 5, that is wholly centered on the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island.

Thank you for listening. Thank you, again, for your service, and thank you for your consideration.

(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

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Franky Correa, and after Franky Correa, by I. Daneek Miller. And then, following I. Daneek Miller, we will have Koem Zafar (phonetic).

FRANKY CORREA: Good evening. Thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of our community. My name is Franky Correa. I grew up in Red Hook, Brooklyn, which is currently part of District 38. I moved out to Sunset Park in the early '80s, when most of the factories, warehouses and shipping yards closed down. I still currently own and live in Sunset Park with my wife and two daughters.

When I moved to Sunset Park, it was pretty much the same thing. It was a working-class community, who worked at the factories and warehouses, and our waterfronts, that has recently been replaced by urban retro malls, when our government couldn't protect our manufacturing from going overseas.

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There have always been a strong connection in both Red Hook and Sunset Park, who held the line through the '70s and '80s and '90s, when drugs, gangs, economic neglect, ravaged our communities. And we were able to rebuild these two communities under one representation.

Now that these two neighborhoods have been growing and Manhattan is too expensive to live in, there has been a large migration of city dwellers. Developers have been focused on taking over our communities and pushing people out. Their focus has been to takeover our waterfront. But since our communities have a strong opposition and been fortunate enough to have City Council representation to follow the wishes of their constituents, the next important move for the powerful real estate industry, is to gerrymander and maneuver to weaken our voices out of power, and remove those representatives

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who are willing to fight for the audacity of equality.

This map redrawing has characterization plans to divide and conquer, and take the voices from those with little influence. It is not going to represent our working class District 38.

First, Sunset Park gets separated from my home, from the united front of people of color from Red Hook. Secondly, Sunset Park is divided in half, again, by a proposed District 43, designed to create a majority Asian district. As a National Grid field operation inspector, who has been on the job for 34 years, I know these neighborhoods intimately and witnessed the migration, gentrification of both Brooklyn and Queens.

District 38 currently covers parts of Bensonhurst -- which makes no connection-sense. If the Commission wants to give the Asian community a

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stronger and full representation, which -- which, I support, I would suggest the Commission create a district east of 9th Avenue to Bensonhurst, Dyker Heights and Bath Beach area, where Asian population has migrated and grown tremendously.

You should not break up two communities that have binded wealth together to create another and not give them proper representation.

With the proposed change, most of the new voters in District 38 are going to be from the Bay Ridge area, with a higher AMI and don't share the same social economic challenges that don't -- and don't have connection to what happens to the working front. Under this proposal, Red Hook would now face the same challenge, as the majority of District 39 voters come from more affluent areas of Park Slope, where their representative have to choose the influential part of the district with higher voting, people with power with

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low AMI.

The Gowanus is an example of divide and conquer. Gowanus is part of District 39 but it's no match for a powerful real estate industry, with lots of money, influence and patience on the buy-and-hold-long game. Notice that after the federal super fund, they were able to rezone Gowanus and the city miraculously was able to find shutup-money, to resolve Gowanus' NYCHA issues, just to get the rezoning.

Thank you to the Commission for taking the time to consider my testimony. As a life-long resident of this district, I understand we must respond to the changes. However, this proposal will be a disservice to our community by tearing it apart and combining it with other communities that have a very different racial, social, economic and political differences. Thank you.

(Applause)

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CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony. Next is I. Daneek Miller.

I. DANEEK MILLER: Good evening, good evening. Members of the -- members of the Commission and to everyone else that came out tonight. And I got to say, that's a hard act to follow, right?

So good evening, I'm former Councilmember I. Daneek Miller, of the 27th Council District, currently, district leader of the 33rd Assembly District in Southeast Queens.

My testimony tonight is about the 27th Council District primarily, but also about Southeast Queens and outlying impact on the 28th, 31st and 24th Council Districts. I begin with the obvious, the lack of density in the 27th District mainly because there's a community of single-family homeownership, and certainly being impacted by the 5 percent threshold that

1  
2 we're looking at, and folks moving out.

3 Certainly, this has been an impact  
4 on communities' population, but not its  
5 political and economic empowerment and  
6 its cultural influences, all of which is  
7 well-known and well-documented locally  
8 and nationally. Southeast Queens is  
9 home to many political and cultural  
10 icons, and has its own historical  
11 district, i.e. Addisleigh Park.

12 The phenomenon of political power is  
13 not by accident, it is, in fact, by all  
14 metrics that measure voter  
15 participation, civic, and faith-based  
16 engagement, union participation and home  
17 ownership, is where we thrive.

18 While not mutually exclusively  
19 together, they have helped to make and  
20 create the largest African-American,  
21 Afro-Caribbean homeowner community in  
22 the nation, as well as the most densely  
23 populated union community, and the most  
24 densely populated union state in the  
25 nation.

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2           The economic and the -- the social  
3           and economic impact of Southeast Queens  
4           and its surrounding communities, in  
5           particular the downtown Jamaica area,  
6           which is currently undergoing a major  
7           Renaissance of housing, transportation,  
8           economic development and et cetera,  
9           unfortunately is being negatively  
10          impacted by its currently lack of  
11          continuity because of its current  
12          boundaries mainly the 27th and 24th  
13          Council District lines being split and  
14          bordered at the north and south end of  
15          Jamaica Avenue.

16                 Because of these boundaries, Jamaica  
17                 lacks continuity, not only in just -- in  
18                 social and cultural and economic  
19                 development but more importantly,  
20                 because of its delivery and services.  
21                 For example, Community Board 12 has the  
22                 highest number of shelters placement in  
23                 the City of New York. The most densely  
24                 populated portion of that, lies within a  
25                 few blocks north of Jamaica Avenue in

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Community Board 12.

While there are thousands of newly affordable housing units that have been built south of Jamaica Avenue and Community Board 27 conversely, we see overwhelmingly market-rate, new development housing, north side of Jamaica Avenue, which is not consistent with the economic values of the residents that currently live there, which also, for a plethora of reasons, lends itself to gentrification.

Continuity and values are important, just as we have seen the unification of downtown Jamaica -- and I know this is something else, but that was something that was spearheaded in Community Boards 27 with support from Community Board 28 and very little from others.

During my time in the council, while we've never acknowledged boundaries, boundaries matter. When it creates unfair burdens on council districts, representation should reflect the needs

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of the masses and exhibit the continuity necessary to maintain upward mobility for these historic communities of color.

These communities deserve representation that share their values and experiences and bring cultural competency within their voice with them to City Hall. Furthermore, an attempt to create new opportunities at the expense of the Southeast Queens historic communities, is unjust and further diminishes the mission of the Voting Rights Act.

In conclusion, Rochdale Village, one of the largest cooperative communities in the nation deserves for its continuity and service and representation. Instead, we see an intent to subdivide this enclave of Black resiliency into multiple council districts. This is an indictment of incompetency and insensitivity and its intentionally diminishes one of the most strongest and powerful voting blocks,

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not just in the state, but in the nation  
within Southeast Queens.

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I would suggest further, that if the  
objections of this Commission is to  
expand the footprints of the 24th, that  
you do it east, west and not north,  
south.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: I'd respectfully ask  
for you to wrap up.

10

11

I. DANEEK MILLER: Hmm?

12

CHAIR WALCOTT: If you can start to  
wrap up, sir.

13

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I. DANEEK MILLER: Because you are a  
friend and a neighbor and someone I'd  
probably have to see tomorrow as we walk  
and run, I will conclude, so -- so  
submitted.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: That's why I said  
respectfully.

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(Applause.)

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I. DANEEK MILLER: Thank you, sir.

23

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much  
for your testimony.

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(Applause.)

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Next we have a Tom Nappa (phonetic).

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Okay. After that, we'll have

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Marilyn Miller, and then after Marilyn

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Miller, we will go back to the virtual,

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and then, back to in-person.

7

Is Marilyn Miller here?

8

Marilyn Miller.

9

(Cross talk.)

10

Okay, just wanted to know, that's

11

all.

12

Let me go back to virtual.

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And virtual, I have next up is Erica

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Berson.

15

Erica Berson? Erica Berson? If not

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then, Jenna Lang.

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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Erica Berson?

18

CHAIR WALCOTT: Erica Berson, yes.

19

Erica Berson?

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ERICA BERSON: Yes, I'm here, thank

21

you.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: You are here, okay.

23

There you go.

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ERICA BERSON: Just really quickly,

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Russell Squire, who is the CBA Chair and

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he was called, but nobody promoted him.  
So can you go to him first and come back  
to me, please.

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'll be glad to  
since we did call, but no problem.

Russel Squire, please.

ERICA BERSON: He's in the breakout  
room.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Russel Squire?

ERICA BERSON: They need to promote  
him.

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm not sure what  
you mean by "promoting him".

ERICA BERSON: So he can speak, what  
they're doing to everybody for them to  
speak, so I'm not sure who's operating  
the Zoom. But there's no way to chat  
with anybody that's hosting.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Let us look into  
that. Why don't you take the time now  
to testify. And then we'll see what's  
happening.

ERICA BERSON: Thank you, and thank  
you for having us. I live in -- I live

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2 on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in  
3 Council District 5. I'm really here,  
4 hopefully, testifying for the  
5 collective, because based on the current  
6 maps, half of a block away from me,  
7 which is known as Bedpan Alley, where  
8 all of the hospitals are, would become  
9 CD 26. And based on our City Charter,  
10 and based on the rules that the  
11 Commission has on their own site, this  
12 actually goes against both of them. But  
13 I'm not going to rehash what other  
14 people from both communities in Queens  
15 and the Upper East Side have said.

16 One of the things that hasn't been  
17 addressed right now, is honing in on all  
18 of the hospitals and the academic  
19 institutions, like HSS, Memorial Sloan  
20 Kettering, New York Pres Law of Cornell,  
21 Rockefeller and Cornell Tech. Manhattan  
22 elected officials have years of  
23 experience and expertise in addressing  
24 the compatibility with these  
25 institutions with surrounding

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2 residential areas and we're concerned,  
3 not only about how a Queens  
4 councilmember will be able to handle  
5 this, but it will also show that Queens  
6 has infinitely more medical centers in  
7 it than they do and having spoken --  
8 having attended their committee meeting  
9 last week, we know that isn't the case.

10 We also know that there aren't easy  
11 ways for people to get to the hospitals  
12 or to the doctors' offices. In addition  
13 to that, many of the doctors' offices  
14 that are affiliated with the  
15 institutions would actually be broken  
16 up. Their offices would actually end up  
17 in a different district than the  
18 hospital is in, creating, you know,  
19 logistical issues in oversight for many  
20 different council members, from many  
21 different community boards.

22 And the other thing is the Upper  
23 East Side has a significant population  
24 of elderly people; so would the idea be  
25 that council members from Queens would

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have two offices, one on the Upper East Side? Because we know that older people infinitely are more comfortable going into their council member's office than certainly being on e-mail or on Twitter or other ways.

So while, you know, my -- my neighbors have addressed the issues that we've faced with taking Roosevelt Island out of the district, which has always been here, as well as the parks, the hospitals are a huge part of the Upper East Side's character and continue to be. And again, half a block away from my building would be a new district. And again, based on the City Charter, it goes against the City Charter to split up these neighborhoods and communities.

And I -- I -- it's interesting that a gentleman earlier from Queens said that neighborhoods in Queens go by their own neighborhoods, but places in Brooklyn and Manhattan don't. And you know, as a New Yorker who was born on

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the Upper East Side, and has lived in different places in Manhattan, as well as overseas, I would say that we are -- we are just as community-oriented, especially when you look at the neighborhoods around hospitals, and especially when you look at the neighborhoods around the universities.

And speaking of the universities, the current map literally breaks the bridge over Lexington Avenue at Hunter College into two districts, right in the middle of the street on Lexington.

So for those reasons, I -- I would strongly urge the Commission to return to the drawing board and not adopt the proposed districts referenced above for CD 5 and CD 26. You know, we're all here to help you come to an equitable conclusion for our neighborhoods in our communities but the current version, it just really isn't there.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much for your testimony.

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ERICA BERSON: Thank you.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you.

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(Applause.)

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Jennifer Baratta -- so the next

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three would be Jennifer Baratta,

7

Alexandria Zuraski (phonetic), and then

8

Francis Salvin (phonetic) and then,

9

we'll go back in-person.

10

Okay. No?

11

Alexandria Zuraski (phonetic).

12

ALEXANDRIA ZURASKI: Hi, good

13

evening. Thank you so much for giving

14

me the opportunity to testify. Can you

15

hear me?

16

CHAIR WALCOTT: We can, but just for

17

an official record, you're -- your name.

18

Which one?

19

Alexandria.

20

CHAIR WALCOTT: Yeah, Alexandria.

21

Okay, thank you.

22

ALEXANDRIA ZURASKI: You're welcome.

23

I'm testifying this evening in support

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of the Districting Commission's

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preliminary draft of the council

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2 districts. I live in District 19 and  
3 I've lived here my whole life, and I  
4 support the first draft because I  
5 believe it's important to keep the  
6 district the way it is. The first draft  
7 of district's lines are beneficial for  
8 the community because it preserves the  
9 historical significance of the district  
10 itself.

11 The communities in the district get  
12 along well as they are and most of us  
13 feel that it's important not to divide  
14 up the district. Last, but definitely  
15 not least, the communities of the  
16 district represent the diversity of the  
17 city, from recent immigrants, to  
18 third-generation Americans. We're a  
19 community within the district that  
20 supports each other, and we share the  
21 same hardworking family values that make  
22 this district so special.

23 Thank you so much.

24 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
25 your testimony.

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Next virtually is Francis Scallen  
(phonetic).

And whoever's on the screen --

JENNIFER BRUNNER: Hi, my name is  
Jennifer Brunner.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Oh, okay, welcome.

JENNIFER BRUNNER: Hi, nice to meet  
y'all. I live in Bellrose, Queens.  
We're a part of District 23. I would  
like to say that although Bellrose is  
somewhat represented, it's -- it's not  
always the case. We have been --  
whenever the power goes out on my block,  
it takes Con Ed forever to find us.  
Why? Because we're on a dead end  
street, we -- we have lost power due to  
Hurricane Sandy. It took until Election  
Day of that year to get the power back  
on and all it required was a switch.

I'm not saying that the districts  
are wrong, but what I'm saying is that  
when it comes to Bellrose being  
represented, we are getting the short  
end of the stick. And quite frankly,

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I'm sick of it.

I am 43 years old. I have lived here my entire life, and I would like to see us represented better. And that's not just simply because we're near the Nassau County border, but because we deserve to be represented better.

We deserve to have our people told, "Hey, this is what we're going to do and we're actually going to make it better for you guys to live."

Because when -- the Long Island Rail Road decided to raise the New Hyde Park Rail Road, the traffic backed up to the Cross Island, going past the Cross Island on Jamaica Avenue and Jericho Turnpike and I was late getting to work.

Now, I know that's not what you're dealing with, but what I'm telling you is, we need people to come here who actually care that this is going on, that the street races are going on, that the fire pump is on Memorial Day weekend through July. We need someone to care.

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So please, do something that shows that you give a damn about Eastern Queens. Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

We'll try one more time and then, we'll go back in-person.

Is it Francine Stanley? Thank you.

Then, we have Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson and then following him, will be -- I'm sorry.

Before we get to the assembly person -- yes, hi.

(Laughter.)

Ma'am, in the blue sweater.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, good evening, great to be with you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Your name?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's hard to imagine that on this day, August 16, 1896, the last great Gold Rush in the Americas occurred. In many ways, I think it's very befitting as to why

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2 we're here. Classic, tech school, old  
3 school, new school, right-now school,  
4 American politics, to the victor belong  
5 the spoils. And sometimes when the  
6 victor is greedy or loses judgment or  
7 loses wisdom, assuming all three were in  
8 placed to begin with, they have a lust  
9 for power that is transmuted and  
10 communicated in that bad old way called,  
11 gerrymandering.

12 And that's why we're here. I think  
13 it's important to recognize the fact  
14 that gerrymandering has been in the vein  
15 and the blood of the American political  
16 system since day one.

17 (Applause.)

18 And many would say it served America  
19 quite well. Of course there are many  
20 who would credibly argue otherwise. In  
21 my opinion, listening here tonight to  
22 all the passion that has been brought to  
23 the table, and I so honor everyone's  
24 point of view, I can't help but  
25 appreciate how everyone wants to stay in

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2 their crib. They want to stay in their  
3 hood. They don't want to cross the  
4 line. So if this Commission goes down  
5 in history as failing, they failed big.  
6 Fail on the right side of history,  
7 appeal to politicians who understand  
8 that gerrymandering is like quicksand,  
9 it's gone. It's not your ace in the  
10 hole, it's not the only way you're going  
11 to get votes. There are real  
12 stakeholders who know what you're doing,  
13 who care about what you're doing, who  
14 wish to be engaged in what you're doing.

15 Indeed, if the last council taught  
16 us anything, it's that the old playbook,  
17 even the Council's old playbook, the  
18 rules have changed.

19 When the member from the Upper East  
20 Side, Ben Kallos (phonetic), was against  
21 the change on the south side of 67th  
22 Street, a block from where I grew up,  
23 his voice did not carry the day.

24 Heretofore, council members went along  
25 to get along, they showed collegial

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difference to the member, and the members' wish, when an important decision was being made.

I think it's time to unmask the truth, that while it's terrific, and I love the technology that has been engaged in deciding the service of drawing lines, lines don't make a district, people make a district.

(Applause.)

And every district deserves the right to have a representative who does not seem to cater to only one group over another, but to who has the capacity, the recognition, the ability to improvise, to find a way through --

CHAIR WALCOTT: If you could start to wrap up, please.

-- to that great city in the sky, a compromise with character and do it in a way that is just.

Today, Mr. Chairman, I know how much you love jazz. It also happens to be the birthday of three fabulous jazz

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pianists, none other than Mal Waldron,  
Carl Perkins, and of course, Bill Evans.  
I am beseeching you all to find a way  
out of this morass, to improvise to the  
better side of history.

7

CHAIR WALCOTT: You really need to  
wrap up, please because we --

9

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, where  
every person in this city will  
understood -- understand, that their  
votes matters and their voice matters,  
and it will be counted. Thank you.

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(Applause.)

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CHAIR WALCOTT: In fairness to the  
speakers, even though you may totally  
agree with what they're saying, when  
we're having it transcribed and the  
applause is taking place, it's difficult  
to hear what the speaker is saying. So  
I just say that as we move forward.  
Thank you.

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ASSEMBLYMEMBER GLENN ANDERSON: Can  
you hear me? I don't know if I could  
match her passion although some of the

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2           comments she made was quite interesting,  
3           but good evening to the entire  
4           Commission. Gracious to be here this  
5           evening. My name is Glenn Anderson and  
6           I'm proud to represent the beautiful and  
7           diverse 31st Assembly District in  
8           Southeast Queens, which encompasses so  
9           many amazing and unique neighborhoods.  
10          But I want to talk about the two council  
11          districts that are in the majority of my  
12          assembly district today, and what are  
13          some guiding principals that the  
14          Commission should use as we're going  
15          through the redistricting process.

16                 So we want to make sure that, number  
17          one, a district that is as historic as  
18          the 31st Council District, looks at the  
19          history, the creation of that district,  
20          who was created roughly around the late  
21          '80's early '90's, to ensure that  
22          representation of a growing  
23          African-American and Caribbean-American  
24          community could be heard in the City  
25          Council, which was not heard prior in

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the former position in the City Council. It was called something different, Board of Estimate, I believe.

And so in the original drawing of the City Council District, the JFK Airport and all the elements were kept in one district. So the cargo areas as well as the actual areas in which the airplanes fly, the runways, et cetera, the operations space, has historically been in one council district, and already exists in one assembly district, which is my assembly district, one senate district, which is the 10th Senatorial District, and one congressional district, which is the 5th Congressional District. So everywhere else, it's in one district, except the City Council. So we'd like that to be a guiding principal in terms of the redistricting process.

We also want to make sure that the Commission considers keeping the Rockaway Peninsula, and areas of the

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Rockaway Peninsula, that have a growing Caribbean-American and Black-American population together. So I'm going to talk about that, right.

So in the proposed maps, there's some moves -- there's some moves of, I believe, elections or census tracts, that move parts of the 31st into the 32nd. So we want to make sure those communities are kept together.

To the reasons why, if you look at the public housing developments that are on the edge of the 31st and 32nd council districts, that development is called Hammel Houses, and that development is a consolidation of Carlton Manor, which is further into the district; so that's one development. Even though the developments are not physically in the same space, it's one development, so that's a consolidation. And I just want us to respect that consolidation of both Hammel Houses and Carlton Manor. That's really important.

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2           Also, the other council district  
3 that overlaps me the most, is the 28th  
4 council district and I notice that  
5 Rochdale Village, which is the largest  
6 cooperative village outside of Co-op  
7 City, so we have our own little Co-op  
8 City here in Queens, and we're gracious  
9 for it, but the current maps divide that  
10 community, which shouldn't be.

11           And as I close out, because I hear  
12 the bell, but you know when you give a  
13 politician a mic, we don't know when to  
14 stop, so I'm glad you guys have the  
15 timers.

16           We want to make sure that the  
17 growing South Asian-American community  
18 is represented by uniting parts of the  
19 32nd District, uniting neighborhoods  
20 that align into the 32nd District.  
21 Growing South Asian-American communities  
22 into that district, would ensure that  
23 their representation is been met on the  
24 council level.

25           So those are my three guiding

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2 principles and I hope the Commission --  
3 I see folks taking diligent notes, so  
4 that's good. I hope that the Commission  
5 considers those things because it's  
6 about making sure that there's a balance  
7 in representation, and that communities  
8 which have historically been fighting  
9 for a voice in City Hall and et cetera,  
10 can continue to have that  
11 representation.

12 So thank you again to the Commission  
13 for your hard work. I do not envy you,  
14 and I appreciate everything that you all  
15 are doing here tonight.

16 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you  
17 Assemblymember.

18 The next three in-person would be  
19 Marilyn Miller, Nick Calotta and  
20 Carolina Gill.

21 So Marilyn Miller, Nick Calotta and  
22 then, Carolina Gill.

23 Oh, all right, so I don't see  
24 Marilyn Miller.

25 Nick Calotta?

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, hi.

NICK CALOTTA: Thank you, Chair Walcott and members of the Districting Commission. My name is Nick Calotta, and I'm a resident of Jackson Heights and for many years, District 26 was my home. My testimony is based on over 15 years of experience working at the City Council and the Mayor's office, and as an organizer in Queens.

The main issue I'm here to speak tonight about is Woodside being divided into four council districts. In my experience, when it comes to the delivery of government services, it is always working-class communities of color, that live in neighborhoods divided into multiple districts, that are ignored the most by our city. I've seen elected officials and government leaders decide that certain communities weren't worthy of resources or central to their basis of power, or lacked the numbers needed to be important.

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2           The priorities of these communities  
3 are less likely to be taken seriously by  
4 our city. Constituent service needs are  
5 treated with less urgency and community  
6 organizations do not receive the funding  
7 they deserve. As with the Philipino and  
8 Bangladeshi communities and LatinX  
9 communities, I want to specifically  
10 highlight the Tibetan community, as well  
11 as the larger Himalayan community, that  
12 will negatively be impacted by the  
13 proposed map, if adopted.

14           A majority of this community, many  
15 of whom are refugees as a result of  
16 occupation of their homeland, reside in  
17 both 25th and 26th Districts. By  
18 dividing Woodside, the proposed map  
19 would siphon many of these community  
20 members into the 30th Council District  
21 as well. It would disconnect the  
22 Tibetan community residing in the 26th  
23 Council District from the Tibetan  
24 Community Center.

25           I've worked with this community for

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2 many years, and while serving at the New  
3 York City Office of Immigrant Affairs,  
4 we worked with -- closely with leaders  
5 from various Himalayan communities to  
6 estimate their combined population. The  
7 population, our official estimate was  
8 about 50,000 -- over 50,000 people; the  
9 majority residing in Western Queens  
10 neighborhood.

11 Should the proposed map be adopted,  
12 over a dozen Tibetan and Himalayan  
13 community centers, religious  
14 institutions in Woodside, would  
15 needlessly become siloed in District 30,  
16 further marginalizing this community of  
17 interest.

18 Like with other communities,  
19 dividing the Tibetan and larger  
20 Himalayan community into three council  
21 districts, will cause harm to their  
22 political trajectory and power. I urge  
23 the Commission to keep Woodside whole.  
24 I support the map proposed by  
25 Councilmember Julie Won, where the

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boundaries are 31st Avenue to the north, so that the Tibetan Community Center can remain in the 26th Council District.

I also believe, after speaking with many of my friends in that community, that Queensbridge and the Ravenswood Houses should remain in the district. I ask that you keep this a Queens district. And I am opposed the incorporation of Manhattan's East Side and Roosevelt Island, as this will dilute the political power of working class residents of color in District 26.

Lastly, I want to take a second to lend my strong support for the Unity Plan Maps that will keep South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in one council district, between Richmond Hill and Ozone Park.

Thank you for your time and service to our City.

(Applause)

MR. WALCOTT: And thank you.

(Applause.)

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I can't say you win a prize, but I think that's the first time I heard an end right on the timer going off. So congratulations on that.

Next, welcome.

MS. CATALINA: Hi, good evening to everyone. Thank you for being here to listen to our concerns regarding the proposed maps.

My name is Catalina, and I am a Colombian immigrant. I am here to make sure that the voices of those who cannot be here are heard.

I am here to urge the Redistricting Commission to go back to the drawing table and keep District 26 together. This is a diverse community, and we're made up of mostly -- we're made up of the very communities of interest protected by the Voting Rights Act. The proposed maps for District 26 decreases the Latino population from 29 percent to 22 percent. We cannot also forget the residents of the Queensbridge Houses

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2 Ravenswood and Woodside Houses, the  
3 largest public houses -- houses in the  
4 country, that have been part of this  
5 district since the 1940's. These three  
6 NYCHAs being together, provides  
7 consistency and continuation in  
8 receiving public resources, such as  
9 capital improvements. Cutting the map  
10 of the districts they have traditionally  
11 been part of, will disrupt the education  
12 accessibility and funding of projects.

13 This preliminary map will break up  
14 our immigrant communities and  
15 communities of color into four different  
16 council districts severely limiting our  
17 political power. These proposed maps  
18 fail to comply with the City Charter's  
19 requirements of fair and effective  
20 representation. I ask you here, today,  
21 that you go back to the drawing table  
22 and keep District 26 in Queens only.  
23 Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much

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for your testimony. Next, we have -- we  
have three more in-person, and then we  
will go back to the virtual.

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Sarah Mohammed, William Scarborough,  
and Christina Sovereign.

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SARAH MOHAMMED: Good evening.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Why don't you move  
the mic just down a little more?

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SARAH MOHAMMED: Thank you.

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Good evening, thank you to the  
Commission for holding this hearing. My  
name is Sarah Mohammed and I'm an active  
member of South Queens Women's March, a  
local grassroots gender justice  
organization.

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At South Queens Women's March, I am  
also a member of our Civic Engagement  
Committee. I have been a resident of  
South Ozone Park for the past twenty-two  
years.

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My family and I have been living in  
the Bronx, and the primary reason we  
moved to this area in Queens, is because  
we found ourselves coming here every

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weekend. My husband played cricket in the neighborhood, the cultural clothing that we purchase were along Liberty Avenue, all my food supplies are purchased here, from the vegetable to the Halal meat.

When we were looking for a home to purchase, we knew this neighborhood reflected our traditions and our values. We have deep ties to this community of interest, specifically the Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park areas that are defined in the Asian-American Legal Defense Fund Community of Interest Map, which I'm submitting in my written testimony.

Since I've had the opportunity to vote, even back home in Trinidad, I always exercised that right. It was a value passed on to me by my dad, who also made voting a priority. When I got to this country, I continued to exercise that right and have always encouraged my friends, family, and colleagues to do

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the same. When it's time to vote, I call upon them and make sure they are registered or plan on going to the polls.

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Through my work with South Queens Women's March, I have also done street canvassing and supported my fellow community members to register to vote and to learn about upcoming elections. However, sometimes I think to myself, what is the purpose of doing this when we have never been able to elect a candidate of our choice? I currently live in District 32, our community has never been able to elect someone in this district, who represents our specific interests.

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For example, none of the candidates who have been elected to this district, champions immigration rights as part of their policy platform. The way our districts has been drawn at the City Council level, never made sense to me and if you stand on the side of justice,

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you will change them for the better.

The map released by the Commission, further divides our community, splitting us even more across Districts 28, 29 and 32, instead of keeping us together.

We are opposed to this map as part of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force. South Queens Women's March supports the Unity Map. The Unity Map creates a plurality APA district in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park in District 32.

As you go back to the drawing board, we ask that you please don't divide us. Please keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park whole, thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Assemblymember William Scarborough.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER WILLIAM SCARBOROUGH:  
Thank you, good evening. My name is William Scarborough, former New York State Assemblyman and currently

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president of the Addisleigh Park Civic Organization.

Commission members, thank you for this opportunity to express our views in regard to the draft City Council District Maps. I'm presenting this testimony on behalf of a number of civic organizations, whose names I will list at the end of the testimony.

We appreciate the hard work and effort that the Commission has put into drafting these maps. However, we have serious concerns about some of the proposed changes that are in the draft maps and we wish to bring these issues to your attention:

First, we are very concerned that the draft map moves most of downtown Jamaica out of the 27th Council District and into the 24th Council District. Downtown Jamaica has been an economic engine of this area and the development and revitalization of Jamaica has provided jobs and business opportunities

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2 for the surrounding Black community that  
3 has historically been left out of these  
4 opportunities.

5 This has been driven, in part, by  
6 Black council members in the 27th  
7 Council District directing funding into  
8 the development of Jamaica, and also  
9 insisting that historically bypass Black  
10 workers and entrepreneurs be given fair  
11 opportunities for participation in this  
12 growth.

13 Taking a large part of Downtown  
14 Jamaica out of the 27th Council  
15 District, would, in effect, close off  
16 these opportunities for that Black  
17 community at a time when investing in  
18 Jamaica is at its highest level.

19 Additionally, the shoppers that make  
20 up the bulk of Jamaica's consumers,  
21 overwhelmingly come from the communities  
22 of Jamaica, St. Albans, Hollis, South  
23 Ozone Park, and other Black and minority  
24 communities in the 27th and 28th Council  
25 Districts.

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2 Residents of the 24 CD, who largely  
3 reside in Jamaica Estates, Kew Gardens,  
4 Fresh Meadows, and parts of Flushing, do  
5 not, as a rule, patronize Jamaica, and  
6 will have little incentive to support  
7 the push with the development of  
8 Jamaica's downtown. We urge you to  
9 reject this proposed change and restore  
10 the current northern boundaries of the  
11 27th Council District.

12 Secondly, we're very concerned that  
13 the proposed map splits Rochdale Village  
14 and puts it into two separate council  
15 districts. Rochdale Village is the  
16 second largest cooperative in the  
17 country, a development of over 25  
18 thousand residents, that is 100 percent  
19 owner-occupied.

20 The history of Rochdale Village is a  
21 microcosm of the Civil Rights Movement.  
22 When it was built in 1961 on the ground  
23 of the old Jamaica Racetrack, Blacks  
24 were not allowed to work on that  
25 project. It took demonstrations by

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civil rights leaders, who went to jail to break this barrier of segregation.

When it opened in 1963, ten percent of the residents were Black. During the tumult of the 1960s and 1970s, Whites left Rochdale in droves and the development faced serious decline.

It has since rebounded, becoming 100 percent owner-occupied and the voting power of 25,000 residents, mandates that the representative of the 26th, 28th Council District pay close attention to their needs. To split this development into two districts, would run counter to general principles of keeping communities with common interests -- common needs and interests intact, and would dilute the power of one of the largest predominantly Black communities in New York City, and indeed the country.

We urge the Commission to reconsider this proposed change.

Finally, we are in support of the

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redistricting maps that has been proposed by the council members of the 27th, 28th and 31st Districts. We feel that these maps protect the economic interests on the residents of Southeast Queens, and keep communities with common interests and needs together.

Thank you for your consideration.  
(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

WILLIAM SCARBOROUGH: Signed by myself, William Scarborough, President of the Addisleigh Park Civic Organization; Walter Dogan, President of the Brinkerhoff Action Association; Austin Bryant, President of the St. Albans Civic Improvement Association; Loretta Humphrey, President of the Greater Triangular Civic Association; Aracelia Cook, President of the 149th Street South Ozone Park Civic Association; and Lester Muse, President

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of the Octagon Neighborhood Association.  
Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

As you're coming down, this is for  
the virtual world, Jean Hall, Isaac  
Blasenstein and Henry Muller. You'll be  
next up in the Zoom queue.

CHRISTINA SOVEREIGN: Hello.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hi.

CHRISTINA SOVEREIGN: Good evening,  
my name Christina Sovereign, and I'm  
honored to be here as the President of  
the Liberty Park Homeowners Association.

Liberty Park is a historic  
neighborhood of an approximately 500  
homes and 700 families located in  
Glendale, Queens. The association was  
founded in 1926, almost a hundred years  
ago. We meet once a month and host  
several community events. Our residents  
work hard to keep Liberty Park going. I  
am here to testify why Liberty Park  
should be kept within District 30.

The current draft places us in

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District 32 and will remove Liberty Park from the rest of Glendale. Liberty Park residents are very active members of the Glendale community and strongly identify as Glendale residents, some having lived there for 70-plus years.

We would like to maintain the same council person as the rest of Glendale so we can continue to work effectively with our councilman, our community board located down the block, which is Community Board 5, the 104th Precinct, local schools, and fellow civic leaders, all which are located in District 30.

We have strong longstanding relationships with all of these entities, which in turn helps us get things done to improve and maintain our neighborhood.

Back to the current draft, which has us in District 32, it's certainly a strange shape and stretches way down through Howard Beach to Rockaway Beach, which is nearly ten miles away from us,

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which in New York City distance might as well be New Jersey. Liberty -- and we are also severed from the rest of 32, because we have very large cemeteries and parks between us. So Liberty Park would be a small bump at the top of the district and an afterthought.

I would also like to add that our current councilman, Councilman Holden, who spoke earlier, has shown us how important a neighborhood's relationship is with the council person. He or a representative from his office attends every single one of our meetings. We are primarily zoned for one or two-family homes, which he mentioned. And the District 30 office really supports us getting things accomplished that are meaningful for our community.

Liberty Park residents and Councilman Holden and the DOT worked together to install two-way -- two four-way stop signs at extremely dangerous intersections in our

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neighborhood. Without Bob and his team, we couldn't have accomplished this. The stop sign changed our lives. It may sound small, but if anyone's ever tried to get a stop sign or worked with the DOT, they know that this is a tremendous accomplishment.

So I would greatly appreciate you considering the importance of our neighborhood, Liberty Park, remaining in District 30, as a way to preserve the history of Civic engagement that we have worked so hard for to maintain, which in New York City, is no small feat.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony. As we queue up, Jean Hall, Isaac Blassenstein and Henry Muller, you have been joined a while ago, but I have not introduced her formally, Maria Mateo, who is a commissioner herself. I wanted to make sure I did the formal introduction to

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you as well.

Jean Hall.

JEAN HALL: Good evening, to the  
Chair --

CHAIRMAN WALCOTT: Good evening.

-- Mr. Dennis Walcott and members of  
the New York City Districting  
Commission. My name is Jean Hall, I  
live in Rochdale Village and I serve on  
the Board of Directors for Rochdale,  
which is in District 28.

I'm opposed to the proposed lines  
for District 28, specifically focusing  
on the impact to the community of  
Rochdale Village. The lines as  
currently proposed would divide this  
community into several council  
districts, 27, 28 and 31. The proposed  
lines are not viable because as the  
second largest Mitchell-Lama development  
in New York State that houses 5,860  
units of affordable housing, serving  
over 25,000 residents of New York, the  
effect would be devastating to us.

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2           This housing community was created  
3           to be a city within a city. Our  
4           community currently spans approximately  
5           128 acres and provides our residents  
6           with open green spaces within the urban  
7           Jamaica community. Therefore, keeping  
8           this community within one district and  
9           avoiding crossover districts, is a key.  
10          Of course, Rochdale Village serves a  
11          vibrant community of seniors and  
12          veterans who depend on the vital  
13          services with senior centers.

14          Segregating the community may jeopardize  
15          critical funding for the social service  
16          needs. Because Rochdale Village is  
17          fully a (inaudible) playground satellite  
18          day care centers and is anchored by  
19          three schools; P.S 354, P.S. 80, and  
20          Junior High School 72 and we have our  
21          own blend of Queens Public Library.

22          Blurring lines to shift this dynamic  
23          landscape would be counterproductive to  
24          keeping neighborhoods and communities  
25          intact.

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2           Because Rochdale Village generates  
3 its own power with our power plant, that  
4 is our most critical infracture source.  
5 The power plant is 21 mega cogeneration  
6 facility, that provides all of our  
7 heating, cooling, domestic hot water and  
8 electric capabilities.

9           Because Rochdale Village offers  
10 amenities and facilities, which include  
11 parks, basketball, and handball courts,  
12 tennis courts, medical offices, a United  
13 States Postal facility, food shopping  
14 centers that provide opportunities for  
15 small business and minority  
16 owned-businesses, keeping our district  
17 compact will align with the objectives  
18 of this Commission is fundamental.  
19 Because the residents of Rochdale are  
20 civic minded, motivated and majority  
21 democratic voters, the Commission must  
22 draw lines that avoid splitting the same  
23 political party. This only serves to  
24 dilute our voting power and may severely  
25 diminish the effectiveness via our

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representation.

Splitting this community in three districts, will certainly not provide cohesive and effective representation and I know that was not the intent of this Commission.

The new line proposed by the Commission splits one of our buildings in half. That would result in confusion for our residents. Based on the current proposal, the Commission did not avoid creating an oddly shaped district. The community continues to grow to serve working class, retirees, youth, seniors and everyone in between.

We have historically been part of District 28 and we want our great community of 20 buildings to remain in District 28 together and not divided.

I urge the Commission to reevaluate the proposed lines and keep Rochdale Village whole. District 27, 28 and 31 council members are working on the Queens -- are working with the Queens

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Civic Congress on a map that supports  
and does not fracture Southeast Queens.

Thank you to the Commission for the  
opportunity to speak.

(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
testimony.

Isaac -- is it Blasenstein?

ISAAC BLASENSTEIN: Blasenstein,  
thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm sorry.

ISAAC BLASENSTEIN: No problem.  
Good evening, everyone and thank you  
Commissioners for your time tonight. I  
live in Sunnyside, south of Queens  
Boulevard, in the 26th District. The  
proposed District 26 would not result in  
quality representation for myself or my  
neighbors.

This proposal would place working  
class neighborhoods, like mine, with a  
median income around \$60,000.00 with zip  
codes in Manhattan where people make  
twice that much.

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This plan would take a coalition district with nearly equal White, AAPI, and Latino populations and replace it with a district where wealthier, whiter, residents would greatly outnumber others. It will further reduce the Black population by nearly a third.

It uses a strangely-shaped border to cut out and remove Ravenswood and Queensbridge from the district and add the wealthier, Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island. The proposal divides Woodside into multiple council districts, disenfranchising the immigrant communities there.

I would suggest that the Commission's proposed map would benefit real estate interest, creating a wealthy, White district containing areas with high land values and proposed luxury redevelopment, while disenfranchising working class communities and their affordable housing needs. The Commission has a

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responsibility to keep neighborhoods and communities of interest intact and I would suggest this map does not do that.

In addition to creating a new wealthier district, this map places together Manhattan and Queens, four community boards in a district that spans the East River. The proposal would place an onerous burden on the District 26 councilmember to effectively attend meetings for four community boards, four community board committee meetings each month, and also attend two sets of borough-specific meetings for all council activities.

The need for two well-staffed district offices will pose further logistical strain on District 26 and the councilmember's ability to provide effective constituent services and representation.

I urge the Commissioners to reconsider the map. I think Sunnyside and Woodside are, you know, best kept

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together and I think myself and my neighbors would be best served as part of a geographically compact Queens District.

Thank you so much for your time. I very much appreciate it.

(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Is it Henry Muller and then Maria Tantillo (phonetic).

Henry Muller.

Maria Tantillo.

Our commissioner again popping up. If not, let me go back to in-person and what I'll do for the first grouping, I'll go through the next group of in-person testimony.

Is it Rosamond Gianutsos? I'm sorry to not say your name correctly.

Following Rosamond Gianutsos, Eugene No (phonetic), and then Derrick Evers (phonetic).

DR. ROSAMOND GIANUTSOS: Good

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evening. It's Rosamond Gianutsos.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Good evening.

DR. ROSAMOND GIANUTSOS: Dr.

Rosamond Gianutsos. I am a member of Queens Community Board 2, but I'm speaking today here in my own personal capacity as a long-time resident of Sunnyside, and I've lived in this community, and I've raised my children here, and I'm now raising grandchildren. And there are some elderly citizens on the other side of the river, just referring to the Upper East Side comment.

In any event, I'm speaking in opposition to the proposed redistricting boundaries for District 26, in that they add Manhattan and Roosevelt Island and takeaway the diverse blue-colored sections of Woodside. Number one, the rules state the district boundaries must be contiguous. However, as has been mentioned, cannot travel to Roosevelt Island without leaving District 26. If

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Roosevelt Island is to be joined with Queens, then it belongs in Astoria. I haven't heard anybody calling for that, of course.

The Manhattan portion of the proposed district contains many hospitals, which most would regard as the jewel in the City's Health Care crown. However, these are not where Queens locals go for emergent care. The present District 26 has not one hospital or birthing center and yet the proposed District 26 will appear to have many of those Upper East Side hospitals, reducing our chances of getting our own local hospital.

The same argument could be made for Parkland and I imagine other issues as well. The districts are very -- have different sorts of resources. Anyway, the proposed redistricting most concerningly splits the community of Woodside like a cluster bomb, disenfranchising ethnic enclaves.

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I am proud of the ethnic and economic diversity in the current District 26. My overarching concern is that our beautiful, diverse quilt is going to become a cashmere blanket, substantially richer and whiter.

Our communities are blessed with over half of our residents born in other countries. We have just elected a councilmember who came to the United States when she was nine years old. We are proud to have welcomed many people to shelters. We have not been a NIMBY area. I'm proud of that fact and particularly in the Blissville section, I hope that Blissville remains part of our district. So my proposal, three parts: Roosevelt Island belongs either in Astoria for the purpose of contiguity or in Manhattan, their preference; bring Woodside back completely into District 26; and finally, Manhattan belongs in Manhattan.

Thank you very much.

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(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.  
Eugene No? Derrick Evers?  
Hi.

DERRICK EVERS: Hello, and thank you  
for listening to the communities'  
testimony today. My name is Derrick  
Evers, I'm a resident of Ridgewood,  
Queens, a Queens Community Board 5  
Member currently living in City Council  
District 30. And I'm here to implore  
you to right the wrong of the past  
twenty years and make Ridgewood whole  
again.

Ridgewood is one of the oldest  
neighborhoods in all of Queens. It also  
falls entirely within one community  
district, entirely within one education  
council, and it has very clearly defined  
borders, including the border of  
Brooklyn to the west, Metropolitan Ave  
to the north, and the commercial train  
line and cemeteries to the east and  
south.

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2 Residents of Ridgewood even vote in  
3 lockstep with their neighbors, with over  
4 75 percent voting for the same city  
5 council candidates. It is by every  
6 definition, a singular community of  
7 interest. The problem is, because  
8 Ridgewood was split in half between  
9 Districts 30 and 34, that vote has  
10 largely been rendered useless and our  
11 neighborhood is actually represented by  
12 the candidate who received 25 percent of  
13 the vote.

14 As you can probably imagine, this  
15 lack of representation has led to severe  
16 inequities in how resources are  
17 distributed to in our current council  
18 district. Making matters worse,  
19 Ridgewood represents the largest  
20 Hispanic population in Council District  
21 30, with the highest concentration, as  
22 you might have also guessed, right where  
23 the district splits.

24 That gerrymandered district line  
25 also runs along two middle schools, one

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2 high school, our only public library,  
3 Mr. Walcott, and three parks.

4 This summer, those parks received  
5 zero public funding, zero program summer  
6 funding, and in this last budget, every  
7 single school in Ridgewood is facing  
8 massive cuts. But the ones along that  
9 district line, I.S 93, I.S. 77 and  
10 Grover Cleveland High School are getting  
11 cut by an average of over \$800,000.00  
12 each this year. And in the last record  
13 of SAT testing results, shows that those  
14 two middle schools averaged less than  
15 one percent acceptance rate. And it's  
16 not just the City Council, prior to this  
17 year, Ridgewood had two state senators,  
18 two assembly members, two congressional  
19 reps and the current two council  
20 members. Fortunately, the congressional  
21 and state redistricting largely  
22 addressed the first three; conversely,  
23 your most recent maps would further  
24 divide us and actually split Ridgewood  
25 up into three districts.

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2           But you still have time to right  
3 this major wrong. Given the current  
4 make-up of the maps, the easiest way to  
5 do that is just to extent City Council  
6 District 34 to include all of Ridgewood,  
7 from Grover Cleveland Park up to Fresh  
8 Pond Road and along the commercial train  
9 line to Cypress Hill Cemetery.

10           District 34 needs to take on  
11 population. So it would only make sense  
12 to unite the rest of the Hispanic  
13 community it currently splits in half,  
14 before taking out an entirely new  
15 community in South Williamsburg; and  
16 definitely is the alternative to further  
17 dicing up Ridgewood.

18           In one move, you can unite a  
19 minority community, lift up our schools,  
20 our parks, and our network of community  
21 resources. And as Councilmembers Holden  
22 and Ariola both testified, it would also  
23 strengthen City Council Districts 30 and  
24 32, as it would follow main geographical  
25 boundaries and allow them to shed the

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portion of the district that is at odds demographically and electorally with the rest of their districts.

In closing, I'm begging you, please do not neuter our vote any further. Whether you look at it by demographics, community districts, school districts, easily defined borders, Ridgewood is the embodiment of a community that should be in one council district, and you have the power to make that happen. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Next will be Reverend Colleen Thorpe, then Sheila Lewandowsky (phonetic), Mark Laster (phonetic), and then Nicholas Berkowitz (phonetic.)

Reverend Thorpe? I don't see her. Sheila? Let me just see if Sheila is here, Sheila Lewandowsky. Sheila, she's ahead, and then Mark.

SHEILA LEWANDOWSKY: Nice to see

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you. So greetings, good evening and thank you, Chairman Walcott and the Commission for the opportunity to testify. My name is Sheila Lewandowsky, I'm first-generation United States and testifying as a resident, homeowner of Long Island City and an active voter.

I hope that's not my phone, I thought I turned it off.

I'm also a member of Community Board 2, where I serve on the Redistricting Task Force as -- I was chair of the Bylaws Revisions Task Force, was Vice Chair, Co-Chair of Transportation Committee and founder and Director of Chocolate Factory Theater, which is a local arts center, volunteer and supporter of many other city, state and federal coalitions and groups.

I oppose the districts as drawn, this first draft -- if you can call it that -- for District 26 and encourage you guys to also solicit more community feedback and schedule additional

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hearings in the fall.

This is an incredible turnout, a lot of people haven't shown up though, and it is August when many people are away.

I personally know a number of immigrant families, where they have gone home, and I think their voices need to be heard, especially in this area or in Queens, where they are so much a part of our identity.

I share the mayor's focus on increased equity and antiracism in government and I believe this Commission is a reflection of that. And I want you guys to really reflect on the criteria for fair and effective representation when considering District 26, and communities of interest. That's been mentioned before. You will hear from Community Board 2 chair later. I stand by all the items you will hear in that, that's asking you not to divide us. And some of the reasons go to concern about how the demographics will be changed

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under these proposed lines. District 26 is currently wonderfully diverse, but would become majority White, with an increase in area median income of almost 50 percent, if it is to include parts of the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island.

I have been a resident of Long Island City since 1997, although I was born in Queens. And I still wait for access to amenities like a community center, a hospital, equitable public green space because this district still sits in the bottom three of all of them. Adequate school seats and truly affordable housing based on an area median income less the top 20 percent of earners.

This initial draft for District 26 will just make needed amenities, further from reach from those amenities that exist in Manhattan, and exist in Roosevelt Island, will serve as a smokescreen, boxes checked, without our

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2 local representative government actually  
3 having to provide these needed services  
4 here in this district. I ask that you  
5 truly consider the children, seniors,  
6 immigrants, disabled, and all families  
7 of the existing district and don't  
8 suppress their voices, let them be heard  
9 in the fall. Don't dismiss our needs,  
10 and don't divide us.

11 So I thank you very much for the  
12 opportunity to testify.

13 (Applause)

14 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
15 testimony.

16 Mark Laster.

17 MARK LASTER: Good evening, my name  
18 is Mark Laster and I'm one of founders  
19 of the Central Queens Redistricting  
20 Coalition. I'm also one of the founders  
21 for the Forest Hills Green Team, and  
22 currently serve as the co-chair. I'm an  
23 Executive Committee Member of Queens  
24 Community Board 6 and co-chair of the  
25 Aging/Social Services/Disability

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Committee, I'm also a licensed clinical social worker with over 40 years of practice.

Though the map for District 29 does not have significant changes, it does take in more of Richmond Hill. Under this proposal, Richmond Hill would be divided between council districts continuing to dilute the voices of this community. Secondly, the proposed maps, which we've talked about a lot tonight, would separate Sunnyside from Woodside, which, again, would not be, I think, beneficial.

Third, it moves parts of Elmhurst into one district, although residents have been asked to move into another. Finally, the proposed maps, split Mitchell-Linden neighborhood into two different districts. At the Central Queens Redistricting Coalition, which is a non-partisan, neighborhood-based effort to provide a voice and diverse center in Queens, and we're in the

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process of developing a map for Queens that will address these four concerns I listed above.

As soon as we finalize our proposal, we'll be more than happy to share it with the Commission. As we've worked on these proposed maps, we were curious to better understand why the Commission decided to keep Staten Island whole. This has limited the ability to be more flexible to draw maps that captures communities of interest. Also, as a member of Community Board 6, one of the main areas we were trained on, was conflict of interest policy -- curious to know what the conflict of interest policy is for this Commission.

Finally, after being active with the State Redistricting Commission, we face numerous challenges. When I've attended trainings about this redistricting process, I was informed that the process is much clearer. I'm somewhat disappointed that all the mapping

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decisions have been made in secret without any reported justifications.

I look forward to hearing as to why some of the decisions highlighted in this testimony were made. I thank the Commission very much for this hearing. I look forward to a productive relationship through this process.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Next in-person is Nicholas Berkowitz.

NICHOLAS BERKOWITZ: Good evening, my fellow New Yorkers. Good evening, Commissioners, Mr. Chairman, elected officials. Thank you for coming out to speak up and Commissioners thank you for listening.

My name is Nick Berkowitz and I'm a democratic district leader and state committee member for AD37, which overlaps significantly with both the proposed District 26 map and the existing one, where we are this evening.

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2 I'm also a member in the committee  
3 chair of Queens Community Board 2. I'm  
4 here to speak against the proposed maps,  
5 particularly I'm here to speak about  
6 District 26, and especially the need to  
7 keep Woodside and Sunnyside together. I  
8 hope that my parents will allow me back  
9 into my East Side Manhattan childhood  
10 home after I say this, but I'm confident  
11 that Yorkville will survive being lumped  
12 in with Queens. That part of the East  
13 Side of Manhattan is less wealthy than  
14 its reputation would suggest, but it's  
15 an amenity-rich community that knows how  
16 to get what it needs. I've lived here  
17 in Sunnyside for more than a decade, but  
18 I was there for the East Side High  
19 School fight in the '90s, and we now  
20 have Eleanor Roosevelt High School. I  
21 went to East Side Middle when it was a  
22 single hallway on the 5th floor of P.S  
23 158, now, it's one of the nicest  
24 freestanding middle schools in the City.  
25 What concerns me, is that these

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2 Manhattan resources will become the  
3 thumb on the scale against advocacy on  
4 the Queens side of a two-borough  
5 district. With Yorkville slapped on to  
6 our council district, which is one of  
7 the driest medical deserts in our city,  
8 we'll suddenly be skewed to show a glut  
9 of healthcare access, without a single  
10 new bed or maternal health care facility  
11 being built.

12 Our green star of Queens district  
13 becomes statistically burdened, when we  
14 bring in the East Side Green Way without  
15 planting a single blade of grass or  
16 building a single set of monkey bars.

17 But perhaps my greatest concern is  
18 for my Woodside neighbors. The middle  
19 and low income and largely immigrant  
20 community of interest is being cleaved  
21 in four by these maps, and separated  
22 from Sunnyside, which is deeply, deeply  
23 economically integrated. This is a  
24 neighborhood in need of the strongest  
25 and most robust municipal

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representation, not for afterthought members in City Hall.

We need a council district designed to electorally reward culturally and linguistically competent district services because lives are at stake.

All I need to say is COVID and Ida. All said, I implore you, please change these maps so they don't pit Manhattan's successes against Queens' needs.

Please keep Woodside together so it can fight for itself and thrive. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Next is Maria Vasquez and then we'll go into virtual, and that will be the 5:30 to 7:30 group, and then we'll start the second group.

And as people are getting ready in the virtual world, we'll have, Albert Baldeo, Joane Yu (phonetic), and Bill Perkins up next, in the Zoom testimony.

MARTHA FLORES-VASQUEZ: Good evening

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2 everyone, I want to introduce myself.  
3 My name is Martha Flores-Vasquez. I'm a  
4 district leader in the 40th Assembly  
5 District since 2002. I am also the  
6 director and president of Community  
7 Preventional Alternatives For Families  
8 in Crisis. I sit on the board, the  
9 advisory board of DA Melinda Katz, for  
10 the Latinos.

11 I'm here because I always have a  
12 concern, not necessarily about  
13 geographics, but public service, and the  
14 populations that I serve. And I'm  
15 willing to cross a bridge, I'm willing  
16 to cross over to any borough and help  
17 whoever is in need of help.

18 I'm looking at some numbers, the  
19 most common racial and ethnic group  
20 living below the poverty line in Queens  
21 County, New York, is Hispanic, followed  
22 by White and Asian -- I hope that's not  
23 surprising.

24 Language, let's start with Spanish,  
25 the highest spoken language, followed by

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2 Chinese, which includes Mandarin,  
3 Cantonese, and Bengali. I think that we  
4 have to be mindful of those populations  
5 that are underserved. Even though I've  
6 been a district leader in an Asian  
7 district and I keep getting reelected  
8 even when there's an opponent of any  
9 other ethnicity because of the services  
10 that I provide, I think that we are  
11 underserved in Flushing, the Latinos. I  
12 think there is a lot of division and I  
13 think that -- I haven't heard many  
14 voices here representing the Hispanics,  
15 and I was invited by the Latinos  
16 Presente to be here.

17 But I'm not just here for Latinos  
18 Presented -- Presente, I'm here to ask  
19 this diverse Commission to please serve  
20 the underserved. That should be a  
21 primary focus. And I'm overloaded with  
22 work, you know, I actually cross over to  
23 Brooklyn, now, with the Department of  
24 Aging.

25 I actually was spoken to about

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    serving Latinos in Brooklyn because of my reputation, and I included the Asians. And the Asians will now be represented alongside the Hispanics and everyone else, because I am about diversity. I am about provision of services to all the people.

    We have a Black borough president, we have a Black speaker of the City Council, we have a Black attorney general, we have a Black mayor, who I absolutely adore, Mayor Adams. To me, he's the best mayor ever and we're so fortunate.

    So I hope that my voice is heard because I am the people's voice and when it comes to voting, there is voter apathy. But I think it has to do with a bunch of different components, extremists, not necessarily the people in the neighborhoods. So people have given up on politics but let's not give up on providing service to the public.

    Thank you.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we're going virtual. Albert Baldeo and Joane Yu and then Bill Perkins.

ALBERT BALDEO: Hello, Commissioners, good evening. This is, like you said, a rodeo. In thirty years, this is my third testimonial in three decades currently with this Commission.

I think you've done a very favorable job with the maps, but I believe it needs some tweaking. You cannot put Rochdale Village with Ozone Park, South Ozone Park with Richmond Hill. They have no commonality whatsoever. As a matter of a fact, you're going against the laws of census and redistricting and courts have been upholding this -- as you saw the last redistricting process.

As a matter of a fact, the republicans and democrats who -- well, they didn't agree on anything, but they agreed to one thing and that one thing

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2 was that in Richmond Hill, Ozone Park  
3 and South Ozone Park must be kept  
4 together and that must give you a lot of  
5 food for thought because if the  
6 democrats and republicans, who agree on  
7 nothing else, can agree that these three  
8 communities are so integrated that you  
9 must keep them together, that it  
10 behooves you to listen to that, sort of,  
11 analysis that they did and to, sort of  
12 invoke -- and you've done it to a very  
13 large extent.

14 The only thing is that you've  
15 dragged the lines -- I think you should  
16 start with 32. 32 is more favorably  
17 disposed to include us together; that is  
18 to the Van Wyck Expressway, the city  
19 line just at Woodhaven and from Forest  
20 Parkway and to the Conduit. And I've  
21 submitted a map to that effect.

22 In fact, I believe that the Unity  
23 Map also reflects something similar.  
24 There you have a mass and a base of  
25 folks who have the same historical

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2 heritage, the same ancestry, the same  
3 customs, they worship at the same  
4 schools and churches and they play  
5 together and work together. There's  
6 also essential workers who deserve some  
7 consideration and they have been the  
8 backbone of this local economy in New  
9 York City. So it behooves you to at  
10 least give them justice.

11 That justice is very simple, that  
12 you keep them together. They live in  
13 one and two-family homes and therefore  
14 their mortgages and so forth, property  
15 taxes are issues that must be tackled  
16 together. That is why putting them  
17 together would be good.

18 My good friend, I. Daneek Miller,  
19 former City Councilman, he also talked  
20 about keeping Rochdale Village together.  
21 I agree with that, but not at the  
22 expense of other communities and also  
23 not dividing Richmond Hill, Ozone Park  
24 and South Ozone Park with Howard beach  
25 because they are disparate communities,

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they're separate. They have nothing in common and it only creates tension and it's the wrong thing to do. But you have enough mass, you have enough critical mass of folks to put them together in one city council district; in Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and Ozone Park.

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And that is what I would advise you strongly to do and we would ask you to do that because it satisfies all the legal criteria for redistricting, it is a purposeful approach to this issue and it's also one that we must embrace as a matter of both law, reality, morality and conscience, so I would ask you to do that.

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Now, why do I say this --

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CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm sorry to interrupt, but it sounds like you're going to go into another major theme and we have other people who are --

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ALBERT BALDEO: Oh, no. I was just twice-elected in District 38, which is

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2 Woodhaven and Richmond Hill and also in  
3 24. So my point to you is that it  
4 already shows the commonality of  
5 electing one person, of being together  
6 and of doing that, we respectfully ask  
7 that you keep Richmond Hill, Ozone Park  
8 with South Ozone Park together, the  
9 Forest Hill, the Forest Parkway,  
10 Woodhaven, our city line to the Conduit  
11 and to the Van Wyck Expressway and not  
12 divide Rochdale Village or not use us as  
13 filler for any other district. That's  
14 all I ask -- or that's all we ask  
15 because I'm an elected district leader  
16 and I speak for this community. So  
17 thank you very much, Commissioners, and  
18 we hope you do the right thing.

19 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
20 testimony, Joanne Yu.

21 Joanne Yu.

22 Next would be Bill Perkins.

23 Bill Perkins: Thank you,  
24 Commissioner. As a way of background,  
25 my name is Bill Perkins. I live in

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2 District 31 in Rosedale. We've been  
3 working very closely with our elected  
4 official, Councilmember Selvena  
5 Brooks-Powers, as well as the local  
6 civics. We've also reached out to our  
7 other districts, District 27 and  
8 District 28, worked with the local  
9 civics there and the elected officials.  
10 So you're likely to hear some similar  
11 testimony because we work together to  
12 make sure that, you know, we have common  
13 themes that we represented in the  
14 testimony.

15 So what I will do is read my  
16 testimony that I submitted to the  
17 redistricting site, so you'll have this  
18 to review after the meeting.

19 "Dear New York City Redistricting  
20 Commission, thank you for the  
21 opportunity to provide me to comment on  
22 the maps proposed by the Commission on  
23 July 15.

24 We've attached a map that was  
25 created by our councilmember, Selvena

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2 Brooks-Powers, which we feel reflects  
3 what we want our community to be as far  
4 as redistricting is concerned. It also  
5 matches the maps submitted by the Queens  
6 Civic Congress, who are advocating for  
7 our identical positions, while they're  
8 thoughtfully bouncing the districts  
9 adjacent to ours throughout the borough  
10 of Queens and the entire city.

11 As a long-time resident of District  
12 31, the only change I want is to include  
13 all of JFK Airport in our district. My  
14 rationale is threefold:

15 First, JFK was previously a part of  
16 District 31, so this change would simply  
17 correct an error from the last  
18 redistricting cycle.

19 Second, the communities of Rosedale,  
20 Brookville, Laurelton, Springfield  
21 Gardens and Arverne by the Sea, are  
22 currently part of the district, are  
23 directly in the airport's flight path.

24 Lastly, JFK is currently represented  
25 by one congressional member, one state

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senate member, one assembly member, so there is simply no need for two council members to retain the airports in their district.

Consolidating JFK under one umbrella not only makes the most sense, but it will also make it easier to address current and future concerns.

The rest of District 31 should remain intact because of the shared characteristics; race, political party, the geography and type of homeownership in each community. And I evidence this as follows; Rosedale, Laurelton, Brookville and Springfield Gardens are contiguous. Our communities are primarily Black and our residents are registered democrats, who are single and two-family homeowners. Our communities are fighting the same battles, which include improving education, ensuring access to healthcare, protecting the environment, tackling airport noise, dealing with flooding, creating jobs and

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keeping our neighborhood safe.

For decades, the district's civic associations, an example, the Eastern Queens Alliance, Rosedale Civic Association, Federated Blacks of Laurelton, Concerned Citizens of Laurelton, Springfield Rosedale Community Action Association, Spring Garden Civic Association, and Springfield Garden Taxpayers and Citizens Association, have worked closely together with all levels of government to address the issues and drive the changes needed.

We have also launched special task force. For example, 116th Precinct Community Task Force, the Southeastern Queens Zoning Preservation Task Force and the Queens Community Task Force Against Illegal Truck Parking, to fight for the new precinct and to focus on the most important quality of life issues in our community.

The Rockaways and Arverne by the Sea

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1  
2 communities should also remain intact  
3 and within District 31 because their  
4 demographics are like those in the  
5 district's mainlands communities. For  
6 example, the Rockaways' portion of the  
7 district is made up of primarily Black  
8 democrats who own single or two-family  
9 homes and any changes here would split  
10 the democratic vote, disrupt political  
11 dynamics and really adversely affect the  
12 interests and desires of our residents.

13 Therefore, to preserve and  
14 continually advance the common interests  
15 and concerns of the residents in  
16 District 31, I petition the Commission  
17 to keep our district intact with the  
18 only exception being, including JFK  
19 Airport that will restore the continuity  
20 which previously existed. Thank you for  
21 receiving my comments.

22 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
23 your testimony, sir.

24 Next up will be, again, on Zoom,  
25 Timothy Mursa, Louise Booth and then,

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Sheri --

TIMOTHY MURSA: I'm here.

Who's next? Me?

CHAIR WALCOTT: Timothy Mursa.

TIMOTHY MURSA: Got you. Thank you very much and welcome. These guys are good.

I just want to say guys -- ladies and gentlemen, actually, I just want this read this statement so it will be in the record and then, I'll speak to where these lines go and especially when it cuts off one of our buildings. I don't know if anybody ever really looked at the aerial picture for this district. But Rochdale Village is solely a village, we're a box. We are boxed -- when you look within Rochdale, you will see the buildings are all inside. There's no through streets, the only streets are to the front of the building, which is a circle, where you can visually see that the circle leads to the four buildings and you come right

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back out the same way you came in;  
that's the only roadway we have.

And from Rochdale to actually be cut  
in half or basically would be cut in  
half, with my section included because  
we have three sections to a building, A,  
B and C -- I'm in the C Section and that  
C Section falls on the next district.  
I'll just read the statement and if I  
have any time left and opportunity to  
discuss why I feel we shouldn't -- kind  
of like, how you say, happy because I  
hear these other districts and notice  
they don't have everything that we have.  
That's why I say in this -- that's why I  
say this is a city within a city.

The redistricting proposal for  
Council District 28 will split Rochdale  
Village by placing one half of a  
building and a community center between  
two council districts. This will  
fracture our Rochdale Village Community,  
will not protect programming for our  
vulnerable seniors, will not provide to

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continuity resources for this complex and disrupt the operational contingents (sic) of this community -- continuity of this community -- I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous.

This complex has twenty buildings arranged in five circular groups with four buildings per group. Each building has three sections, A, B and C; so that's four buildings in three sections in each building.

Along Bedell Street, there are three groups, 2, 3 and 4. On Guy R. Brewer side, we have Group 1 and 5. The proposed redistricting of District 28 would place groups 2, 3, with the exception of one section in Building 7 and 5, in District 28 and the other half of the building, of Building 7 along with Groups 3, 4 and half of Rochdale Community Center, would be in the next district. Rochdale Village was designed to be and functions as a city within a city, providing continuity of services

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and programs. Rochdale Village has its own power plant that generates all the electrical power, heating, air conditioning and domestic hot water. The power plant provides these services independently with no connection to any outside utility company.

Rochdale Village Department of Public Safety protects the residents, visitors and the property of the complex. Rochdale Village has two shopping malls, a community center and its own branch in the Queens Library System. Any funding provided by one councilmember to his or her's half of this complex, would certainly disrupt the quality of life and will not provide the continuity or resources for their services.

For example, in 2021, Councilmember Adrian Adams was able to provide Rochdale Village with funding for the facade work for all twenty buildings. Had this council district been split

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2 into two at the time, only half of the  
3 complex buildings would have been fixed.  
4 The NORC Program in Rochdale Village,  
5 the senior half -- I'm sorry -- senior  
6 center, will sit in the next district  
7 while the seniors these programs will  
8 service will be split into two  
9 districts, thus leaving the programming  
10 for the vulnerable population  
11 unprotected.

12 CHAIR WALCOTT: Can I ask you to  
13 start to wrap up, sir?

14 TIMOTHY MURSA: I am.

15 CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, thank you.

16 TIMOTHY MURSA: This proposed plan  
17 will create a nightmare scenario for the  
18 managing agent and the management of  
19 Rochdale Village. In fact, this  
20 proposal will make the management of  
21 funds provided by the two council  
22 members from their district with this  
23 complex extremely difficult, and  
24 confusing to the residents and  
25 disruptive the operational continuity of

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this community.

And I just want to add, this is a village and like the young man said before me -- two people before me -- that these lines -- there's are no roads leading through this property. It's just into the circle and out, and that would definitely cause a disruption within and violate actually one of your -- and I'll send it in also with my paperwork -- one of your sections here in this district mapping of a community. And thank you very much. I appreciate you and it was interesting.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony. Thank you, very much.

Louise Booth.

Louise Booth?

And then Cherie (unintelligible).

CHERIE O'GRADIO: Yes, Cherie O'Grado.

Hi. My name is Cherie O'Grado. I have lived in City Council District 28 since I came to this country 28 years

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ago. I currently live here with my husband and my two children. While I am -- I also serve as the Chair of Community Board 9, but I'm here to speak as a resident of City Council District 28.

The Redistricting Commission's draft district map, keeps a huge part of (technical interference) together and significant places in the community, like South Richmond Hill, Richmond Hill, Richmond Hill High School, the cultural center, the Baba Makhan Sikh Center, the Boys and Girls Club of America, Richmond Hill Block Association, except for the area of Phil Rizzuto Smoky Park that also belongs to this as part of its thriving community. This also needs to be incorporated into the redistricting map. All these organizations run from Van Wyck, Jamaica Avenue and Woodhaven Boulevard. These organizations are significantly South Richmond Hill and its vital growth and economic

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development and should be kept together as part of City Council District 28 as it has historically been.

We at South Richmond Hill, would also like to keep our community together under one City Council District as much as possible. This redistricting map should not be in any way drawn political, but as what is right and what is best for this community. It should always be the community's needs and what is best, that should be considered when redistricting conversations like this occurs.

If you were to visit here, then you would see and understand why this district should be kept together. We all want to keep our communities together, but at the end of the day, we have been requesting for Richmond Hill to be kept together with all these places that are connected like a family, and we should do what is in the best interest of this community.

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These decisions will affect us for the next ten years and we can't afford to be split up and wait ten more years to correct an error. Please do right by our community and listen and hear our voices and keep these places in District 28.

Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you very much.

All right. So that's the end of the first grouping. Now, we'll move into the second grouping but before we do, all of you have been outstanding, very patient and I'm going to call for a thirty second stand-up-and-stretch and then we will continue on.

So why don't we all, including me, stand up for a second if you want and stretch.

All right. I feel like I'm about to conduct a giant yoga class, but we're not. So, if we can have our seats, then we're going to go back in-person and

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we're going to go through the first ten  
on the next list. So the next ten will  
be called three or four at a time.

5

So if I can have your attention  
again, and thank you.

7

Folks, if we can take a seat, 30  
seconds is up. I appreciate really the  
attentiveness because I know its been a  
number of people both testifying  
in-person and virtually, and we want to  
get to all of those individuals who are  
still waiting to testify.

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14

So next up, next up will be -- if we  
can -- thank you very much -- will be  
Anell Shahi (phonetic), Anell Shahi.

15

16

17

I tried calling this name before,  
I'm going to try it again, Eugene No  
(phonetic), and then Mazyzo and then  
Jalil Amed.

18

19

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21

So Annel -- Jai, is Annel there?

22

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

23

CHAIR WALCOTT: Now, come on down.  
Eugene is here, but Eugene would follow  
and then Mazyzo next. Thank you.

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2 ANNEL SHAHI: Thank you. Good  
3 evening. My name is Annel Shahi and I'm  
4 an immigration organization at Adhikaar.  
5 Adhikaar means right in Nepali. It's a  
6 woman-lead community and worker center  
7 that provides direct services to the  
8 Nepali speaking community and organizes  
9 low-income workers and impacted  
10 community members to the promote social  
11 justice and human rights.

12 Our center is located in Woodside  
13 Queens, currently, District 26, where,  
14 along with Sunnyside, the vast majority  
15 of our community members live. At  
16 Adhikaar, we define the Nepali speaking  
17 community as descendants of Nepal,  
18 Bhutan, India, Burma and Tibet that  
19 speak Nepali. We are often referred to  
20 as our community's 911 and 311 lines and  
21 we serve more than ten thousand Nepali  
22 speaking people annually.

23 Our community is one of the newer  
24 immigrant communities and according to  
25 Asian-American Federation's profile of

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2 New York City's Nepali American's  
3 report, we are the fastest growing Asian  
4 ethnic group in the city. Most of our  
5 members work in the informal sectors as  
6 nail salon workers, domestic workers,  
7 taxi drivers and restaurant workers.  
8 Through programs like workforce  
9 development trainings, English  
10 empowerment classes and other immigrant  
11 and health related services, we create  
12 access to information, build community  
13 leadership and grow collective to win  
14 right for our communities and dignity  
15 and equality for all.

16 For two long, the struggles and  
17 demands of communities like ours have  
18 been rendered invisible. With the  
19 recently proposed split of District 26,  
20 we are now faced with an all too  
21 familiar situation, one where our  
22 communities are at risk being split up  
23 and made weaker.

24 Many of our working class immigrant  
25 members, like Goma and Sabina, who are

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2 with me here today, live either in  
3 Woodside or Sunnyside, neighborhoods  
4 that are currently in District 26, but  
5 are at risk of being broken up.  
6 Thousands of members that we work with  
7 like them, depend on daily necessities,  
8 services like community space,  
9 groceries, social services like those  
10 that Adhikaar offers, healthcare access  
11 and social and religious community  
12 places that are scattered throughout two  
13 neighborhoods along Woodside Avenue and  
14 Roosevelt Avenue. For these reasons, it  
15 is imperative that Woodside and  
16 Sunnyside are kept whole in District 26,  
17 especially as the Nepali speaking  
18 community that we serve live in both  
19 neighborhoods and share cultural  
20 centers, places of worship, restaurants,  
21 schools and many other institutions of  
22 collective community. Needless to say,  
23 if a part of Woodside is incorporated  
24 into District 30 as has been proposed,  
25 our people would have very little in

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2 common, in terms of language, culture  
3 and our lifestyles in general with the  
4 rest of the population of the new  
5 district and would be rendered a tiny  
6 minority. Our aspirations and needs are  
7 very different from the population of  
8 District 30. Our communities have more  
9 in common with the communities in  
10 Woodside and Sunnyside than those in  
11 Maspeth and Middle Village. Our  
12 communities are already kept whole in  
13 New York State Senate, State Assembly  
14 Community Board and largely also through  
15 the New York District Congressional  
16 District. The fact that we've been able  
17 to speak with one voice also enabled our  
18 community to elect an Asian-American on  
19 the City Council last year for the  
20 district and also elected another  
21 Asian-American as the democratic  
22 candidate in the general election for  
23 assembly. This kind of representation  
24 is a must if our communities are to  
25 continue thriving and be heard by our

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elected officials.

We ask you to please keep our communities whole, keep Woodside and Sunnyside together in District 26. We advocate for the Commission to adopt the Unity Map submitted by the Unity Map Coalition for the unity and proper representation of our community.

I thank you for allowing me share this testimony with you all to uplift the voices and demands of Nepali speaking community for just, fair and inclusive electoral redistricting process.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Mazyzo, no.

And then I said Jalil Amed.

No, okay. So we have a group of individuals, they have a bus and I know they have to leave. Maria Signora (phonetic) -- it's a bus -- Leo Garcia, Claudio Nunez, and Gerald Nunez and

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Sandra Dominguez.

If you could come down and maybe somewhat consolidate testimony and that way we could make sure that you're able to get the bus on time.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Speaking in Spanish.)

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hold on one second, please. We have a translator.

MS. SPEAKER: Yeah.

MR. SPEAKER: I am the one who's going to read the text in Spanish and then I will --

CHAIR WALCOTT: You will, okay. Just double checking.

MR. SPEAKER: But she will do it completely.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

MS. SPEAKER: Why am I here? Today's the day that will be part of history, today's the day where the voice of many will be heard, where we will be many of us. But we will count a few because speaking for them we -- they

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2           couldn't do it. They didn't want to.  
3           Today, I came to give my testimony to  
4           this audience to end our frustrations,  
5           our impotence, of which I'm forced to  
6           do. I'm fighting for social justice  
7           because I think that the redistribution  
8           of the districts, besides being  
9           discriminatory, it would affect  
10          drastically the lives of those -- of us  
11          who live in District 26 and that don't  
12          even have a space for debate.

13                 Did you think about the opinion of  
14          the community when you decided to make  
15          these change? Of course not. We have  
16          been ignored, I feel punished in my  
17          rights, my right to decide the way I  
18          want to live, what future am I going to  
19          leave to those behind me. These  
20          community has been in our 26th --  
21          District 26 is very diverse where the  
22          immigrant communities make up the  
23          majority, where each day we struggle for  
24          housing that is just unaccessible. We  
25          have created roots on where our cultural

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diversity is part of our every day life.

Woodside is my home. I have lived here for 20 years. Public transportation, voter registration, barely livable income. My neighbors are Little Manila and I can name a hundred reasons why I don't want to change my district and I don't want it to be changed.

According to the census of 2020, 66 percent is of Latin descent. We are working people and we're not alone. We are together with other communities, but they are diverse, Asian communities and people of color, the same communities that are interested in being protected because the right to vote is the key.

As an immigrant, I have the need to be here to reject these changes, to be the voice of those who were never informed of how those decisions were made and how they would change our lives. This change in our district is therefore rejected, wrong because these

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2 changes are separating our communities  
3 in four separate districts. These  
4 changes will not benefit us. It will --  
5 they will affect us and in the name of  
6 the thousands who are not able to be  
7 here today because they were not granted  
8 the opportunity, I demand that you  
9 respect our decision because we don't  
10 want the changes that we want to do --  
11 to be a part of District 26. Thank you.

12 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

13 CLAUDIA NUNEZ: Hello, my name is  
14 Claudia Nunez. District 26 is my home.  
15 We are a community that is diverse and a  
16 majority people of color and immigrants.  
17 According to the census of 2020, 66  
18 percent of those who did the survey in  
19 District 26, identified themselves as  
20 Latin Americans, Hispanics, AAPI and  
21 African Americans. The same communities  
22 of interest that have been protected by  
23 the law of the right to vote.

24 The preliminary map of District 26  
25 of the redistribution of Redistricting

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Commission will divide Woodside in four municipal districts. This division is the representation that will have an impact, a negative impact in the capacity of the immigrant community to carry out policies for the public interest.

District 26 is also the home of the Colombian community, the Ecuadorian community, the Peruvian community, the Mexican community and many other immigrants from Latin America that make up 29 percent of our district. From Long Island City to Astoria, from Sunnyside to Woodside, there is not a corner of our district that do not have Catholic Churches, Spanish-speaking Catholic Churches, Mexican taco stands, Columbian bakeries, Peruvian chicken places, artistic organizations of Spanish speakers, such as Thalia Spanish Theater and Folklorico of Mexico, which is located Manhattan and also organizations that are free, such as

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NICE that serve our new immigrant neighbors.

I am here to request the District Redistricting Commission that they don't divide us, and to end the division of the four districts in separate municipalities. If you divide them into separate municipalities, you will make up new maps, you will interrupt the progress that we have achieved and you will divide the flow of resources to the members of the immigrant community.

Our advance in economic matters, in social and political issues, depend on our unity and our ability to achieve equity and representation from every member of the council.

We're a minority group in terms of race and languages. We are protected by the law of electoral rights and those rights are being violated. I recommend that the Commission be very sure that Woodside remain together with Long Island City, Sunnyside and Western

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Astoria, as they have been in the last thirty years and make up the lines or the grids of District 26.

To summarize this proposal -- to summarize this proposal, the maps that have been shown so far point out that the white population amount to 29 percent, while 44 percent were Hispanics and it is reducing towards 29 percent; 22 percent Asian population which is being also reduced from 31 to 25. All of this means that all of these maps are not fulfilling the requirement of just an effective representation for our communities. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you.

GERARD NUNEZ: Hi. My name is Gerard Nunez. I live in Woodside at the Cosmopolitan Houses, which is part of the District 26. I originally lived in Long Island City and attended junior high school in Astoria. I'm also a member of the Cosmopolitan Tenants Association. Our community over the

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years has become vibrant and prosperous with people from many ethnicities and nationalities. They have transformed the district into a great place to live.

The preliminary map for District 26 proposed by the Redistricting Commission, would divide our communities from Woodside, Sunnyside, Long Island City and Western Astoria into four separate municipal districts. The census from 2020 shows the 66 percent of the population in our district is composed of people of color, Latin, Asian-American and Black people. This redistricting proposal would increase the white population from 29 to 44 percent, reduce the Latin population from 29 to 22 percent and the Asian population from 31 to 25 percent.

I believe this division would have a negative impact in our community's capability to conduct policies helpful to our district's public interest and divide the flow of resources to our

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community. Our economic, social and political success is dependant on our unity so that we may have equity and effective representation from our councilmember.

I want to recommend the Commission that our district lines remain the same, as it has been for the last thirty years. Do not let political maneuver interfere with our community's progress and well-being.

I totally reject this redistricting proposal. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

SANDRA DOMINGUEZ: My name is Sandra Dominguez. I'm here in -- pretty much both allow hear my vote -- I'm here to give my testimony to the audience to bring up my frustrations and impotence to the government.

I'm a person of with a older age. I didn't need to be fighting for justice social. I'm here because I think that

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the redistricting of the districts are not logic, discriminatory -- and even giving us a space to do a debate.

Do you think they're a threat causing our community is real? We were in (unintelligible). I feel violent (sic) in my right, my right to choose where I want to live, the future I want to leave to my children. This community in our District 26 is very diverse, where the community immigrants is most of the part where each day we fight for house, more rights, where our diversity is part of our daily life.

According to the census 2020, 66 percent are mostly Latinos, also Asian and people of color. The same communities are protected by the law of right of vote. I'm an immigrant. I have the need to be here, to reject this change and put a loud my voice for all of them that they couldn't be informed and take a decision for change -- for this decision that is going to change a

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lot of lives. These changes in our district is reject because this change is separating our communities in four districts.

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To summarize, the map is going to make the population white to increase in 29 percent to 40 percent; Hispanic is going decrease to -- from the 29 percent to 22 percent and the population is -- Asian population is going to decrease from the 31 percent to 29 percent, which means the maps are not doing the -- a representation and equity for our communities. This change is not benefit us. It's affecting us.

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In the name of those people who couldn't be here, we want to change and we want to be part of District 26.

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(Applause).

21

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

22

BASILIO GARCIA:

23

(Speaking in Spanish).

24

CHAIR WALCOTT: Can you start to

25

wrap up, sir?

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No, no sir.

BASILIO GARCIA: I'm going to say  
this in English.

CHAIR WALCOTT: So with all due  
respect --

(Cross talk.)

Hold on, one second.

BASILIO GARCIA: It's a pleasure to  
be here tonight.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hold on. Hold on,  
one second, please.

If you can just do a summary of it,  
because we have a number of people  
waiting on virtual right now and also  
people who are here waiting to testify.  
If you could give us a summary of your  
testimony, that would be great.

BASILIO GARCIA: Yeah, but I want  
the Latin people, my people, know what  
I'm saying in Spanish.

CHAIR WALCOTT: No, I understand. I  
respect that.

BASILIO GARCIA: And I want the  
people that speak English understand the

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message, too, at the same time.

It's right or wrong?

CHAIR WALCOTT: We're not here to  
get --

(Cross talk.)

Sir. Sir, if you could go ahead and  
not -- we're asking you to just go  
ahead.

BASILIO GARCIA: You let me know  
when.

CHAIR WALCOTT: I just said it, you  
can go ahead.

BASILIO GARCIA: Can I?

(Chorus of ayes.)

All right. Good evening, everybody.  
My name is Basilio Garcia. I represent  
Woodside and I'm glad to be here  
tonight.

The reason that I'm here today is to  
give my testimony before the audience,  
not only because I -- I feel plenty in  
my heart. I got frustrated. I have  
encouraged myself without importance,  
like person of elder age. I can be here

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today filing for injustice social. I'm here because I want and think that the redistricting of district is illogical, discriminatory and no one be here be paid for we discuss it.

Do you think that a threat that comes to our community is that will be a reality? This community of our District 26 is very diversified, where communities of immigrants are the majority, where every day we fight for living and justice for affordable living, where it's diversified and cultural that is part of our day-to-day.

Therefore, the census of 2020, 66 percent of the people of our district identify as Latina Americana, American, Asian and Black, the same community that interests that are protect for the law to the right of vote (sic). I like, a Puerto Rican immigrant, I have the necessity of be here for reject these changes, for right by vote of all those who need -- we are elect.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Sir, if you could wrap up, your time is up.

These change in our district is rejected. Very hard for everyone because these changes all separate our community in four districts -- separate. For some, this proposal of the map half the population white will go up the 29 percent at 44 percent. The Spanish will diminish to 29 percent to 22 and the other population and the --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Sir, sir --

(Cross talk.)

BASILIO GARCIA: -- 31 to --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Sir, I'm saying this with all due respect to you, if you could wrap up, please, because you have been on for over ten minutes.

BASILIO GARCIA: All right. Thank you. Okay.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And we have --

Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

Next, we're going virtual. So

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virtually if -- S. Elish is next on  
virtual, followed by Frederick Bondy,  
and the Faye D. Hill.

5

So first, S. Elish. It says Elish  
there.

7

S. Elish.

8

Frederick Bondy.

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Faye D. Hill.

10

FREDERICK BONDY: Good evening.

11

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm sorry, who is  
this speaking? I'm sorry.

13

FREDERICK BONDY: Can you hear me?

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Yes. Who is this,  
please?

16

FREDERICK BONDY: This is Frederick  
Bondy.

18

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, thank you.

19

FREDERICK BONDY: Good evening,  
ladies and gentlemen. My name is Fred  
Bondy and I have lived in my Manhattan  
building next to the Queens borough  
Bridge for 55 years.

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My wife and I raised our three  
children here, all of whom still live in

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Manhattan.

I'm here briefly to present my four reasons for opposing this preliminary redistricting of lands. Reason number one, it will lead to a loss in funding for our Manhattan East River parks. I've been a frequent user of these parks for all these 55 years. With a Queens voting majority of 73 percent, they will advocate for funds to be primarily directed towards the Astoria and LIC park systems, as well as other Queens parks systems as well as other Queens Parks systems. And our Manhattan parks will suffer because there's only so much money to go around.

Number two -- reason number two, this -- this division or -- or redistribution will cause mayhem and confusion in the administration of our East Side Hospital, such as Weill Cornell and Sloan Kettering.

Reason number three, it will cause the same for our educational systems and

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public schools, along with the loss of  
discretionary funding that the Queens  
politicians will gain.

Reason number four, the same will  
also be true for our libraries and our  
recreational facilities.

We strongly urge the Districting  
Commission not to go forth with the  
preliminary redistricting plan because  
it's an unfair and unnatural marriage  
for these districts.

I hope you will not proceed further  
with it.

Thank you so much, ladies and  
gentlemen.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
testimony.

Next, we'll go back in-person to  
Osman Chaudry and Ray on behalf of  
(unintelligible).

OSMAN CHAUDRY: Good evening,  
everybody. My name is Osman Chaudry. I  
live in Sunnyside last twenty years with  
my sister, senior citizen and

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brother-in-law today.

Today I'm here opposed the Commission draft map because the -- divided Woodside in four part. (Unintelligible) is a cyclone attack and divided it. This is not acceptable. That's why I'm here. Also, I'm not supporting this map. I'm supporting the Unity Map. Woodside and Sunnyside together -- keep together and also the Woodside and Sunnyside the relationship like a family member.

Woodside, Sunnyside stands (unintelligible) all matching each other in both that friendship. Today we divided, we can lose our friendship and also the Woodside and Sunnyside, a lot of Bangladeshi community bought the house that they build almost ten months. And if it divided and when I (unintelligible) the mosque, the Sunnyside the place up (sic) -- I buy like a first class payment and now you divide it to second class go back to

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2 other part. This is discrimination. I  
3 paid that much money first class  
4 Sunnyside, Woodside when I buy the house  
5 and rent. That's why immigrant eight we  
6 lose -- our dream that we immigrant come  
7 we bought house now you're going back up  
8 another district. This is, I think,  
9 they lose their mind. That's why I keep  
10 the Sunnyside, Woodside the same right  
11 now as they have it. Right now I ask  
12 the Commission to see all the audience  
13 here don't divide it up.

14 (Unintelligible) Thank you.

15 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
16 testimony.

17 Lakmani Ray.

18 LAKMANI RAY: Hello, everybody.  
19 Good evening.

20 My name is Lakmani Ray. I live in  
21 Queens for more than five years and I'm  
22 against the Commission's map. I support  
23 the Unity Map because it keeps Woodside  
24 and Sunnyside together and whole. Our  
25 community elected officials for City

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2 Council and assembly, our district  
3 currently is majority Asian. If you  
4 split it up, it will create too majority  
5 white districts. Our communities in  
6 Woodside and Sunnyside rely on public  
7 transportation like 7 Train, M Train and  
8 MTA buses. Maspeth and Middle Village  
9 community mostly rely on driving,  
10 meaning we have very few things in  
11 common.

12 We need a city councilmember who  
13 understands the needs of the immigrant  
14 community and the working class. The  
15 only way that can happen is if you keep  
16 Sunnyside and Woodside together. I'm  
17 here with many community members and  
18 organizations like Mine Drum (phonetic),  
19 meaning (unintelligible) and moving up,  
20 to ask the Commission to adopt the Unity  
21 Map. Thank you.

22 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
23 testimony.

24 Next, we have up Tamang Lama  
25 (phonetic) representing Madgar

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(phonetic) Association.

I'm sorry for mispronouncing your name.

MR. SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Good evening.

TAMANG LAMA: Thank you for having me over here. On behalf of all my Nepalese community, we are together right now. This is Tamang Lama. I am Community Board member too and I am a member of the Damong (phonetic) Society of America and Nepalese community.

We are here today, we feeling real silent and cry (sic) because I'm saying something. I'm going to participate in some boxing ring and I'm fighting with Mike Tyson. Then, he's blowing me on my head now and I'm going down because this -- this -- opposing District 26 and 25, is very diverse like very divide for our community. So on behalf of my community and others (sic) member, I'm telling the truth, our feelings, then

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you guys -- you do understand my feelings today. I just -- we have like a statement together, maybe eighteen or twenty Nepalese and Tibetan communities, representing saying something together right now. All the member are standing behind me, so I'm reading them together.

The Nepali community settle in Woodside, Sunnyside, Elmhurst, Astoria since 1990s. That's a large population -- good like early 2000, more than 2000 people live in Sunnyside, Woodside, Elmhurst, East Elmhurst and Middle Village.

We have a very huge community around the block. In the District 26 and 25, Nepalese community gathering and organize all nonprofit organization, Adhikaar, like (unintelligible) society, like so many like ethnic group we are working together. Like (unintelligible) community, so many communities. All the communities, they donate a day, a dollar a day. They're making they own building

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in our community. Until today, most of the Nepalese community doesn't have -- get any one single penny from the city and state. We donating the money. We making the own house, we building our community better.

Now all communities divided, this is very painful for us. Please save our community together. We want to sit together, not divided. That's why we all are strongly oppose this proposed map of the District 25 and 26, strongly oppose them. We do believe all elected members, Commissioner and all these staff you all hear us (sic) pain today.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Next, we'll go back to our virtual testimony.

And Faye D. Hill, Ambika Persaud and Amanda Debrah.

Faye D. Hill.

If not, Ambika Persaud.

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Amanda --

AMBIKA PERSAUD: Good evening.

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm sorry.

Do I hear voices?

AMBIKA PERSAUD: Hi. This is Ambika  
Persaud.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hi, how are you.  
You're up.

MS. PERSAUD: Okay. Good evening.  
Thank you to the New York City  
Districting Commission for convening  
this hearing today.

My name is Ambika Persaud. I'm an  
active member and a summer organizer at  
South Queens Women's March, a local  
gender justice organization. I've also  
lived in the Queens neighborhoods, in  
Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park for  
most of my life. As a professionally  
trained Indian classical dancer in the  
public dance forum, I've shared my art  
with so many cultural programs and  
festive occasions in this community, all  
spread across district lines that are

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not intuitive and fracture us at our very core.

A little bit about South Queens Women's March, founded right before the pandemic hit, South Queens Women's March amplifies the voices of South Queens, diverse woman and gender expansive people. We are a multi-generational, intersectional platform working to foster women's empowerment. We take our sisterhood to the streets to unify women and gender expansive people and connect them to the tools and resources necessary to empower their own lives and thrive, through mutual aid, healing and art and wellness, youth and professional development and civic engagement, all while meeting people where they are, which is what brought us to become a proud member of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force.

Much of our work has been based in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, home to vibrant and widespread Asian-American

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populations, specifically South Asians, mainly consisting of Punjabi and Indo-Caribbeans. I want to note that the Asian population in Queens has grown larger than any other racial group the last census by 29 percent, an increase, many local CBOs, including ours, put so much energy into capturing.

These communities have been gerrymandered for far too long. They've been disenfranchised. When the pandemic hit, many of our grassroots organizations had to pivot and meet the needs of our community, a community that was number one for COVID incidents and struggling for resources. We want to finally be able to elect candidates of our choice in the place we called home. We can't accept our votes being diluted any longer. Our community of interest is bordered by Woodhaven Boulevard to the west, Jamaica Avenue to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, and Conduit Avenue to the south.

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The map the Districting Commission recently released further divides our community, splitting us up even more across District 28, 29 and 32, instead of keeping us together.

We are opposed to this map. Currently, we're supporting the Unity Map, as it would create a plurality APA District in City Council District 32.

We remain open to any option that will keep us together. Over the last few weeks, we put in the work to have meetings with some of you to advocate to keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park whole. We've also met with elected officials, including Speaker Adrian Adams and Selvena Brooks-Powers.

We have additional meetings with elected officials lined up in the coming days. We remain hopeful that you will all hear our voices. As you go to the drawing board and consider these maps, we ask that you please do not divide us. Keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park

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whole. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Is that Amanda Debrah and Mahtab Khan and then Dan Miller.

Amanda Debrah.

Okay, Mahtab Khan.

MAHTAB KHAN: Hi, good evening. My name is Mahtab Khan. I'm a South Asian activist from Jamaica, Queens. It's my hometown and I've lived here all of my life.

I'm here to speak in opposition of the map draft released by the Commission for City Council District 24. This is the district that I reside in and I disagree with it. Unfortunately, the map draft released by the Commission is very similar to the past District 24 map and I believe it violates the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by not acknowledging the South Asian community's growth or contributions, especially from the new census data that was recently collected.

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The South Asian community has a strong presence in District 24 and has been undermined by the redistricting process.

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This community has been neglected for far too long despite it being a community that had deeply contributed to society both in the economy and the previous election as a strong voting block. That neglect is erasure (sic) and I am surprised that the map released by the Commission does not acknowledge all this.

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We heard of no taxation without representation, but these marginalized immigrant communities are so burdened by taxes yet, aren't receiving adequate representation with people who do understand the struggle.

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We do not have actual representation here from City and State legislators here in South East and East Queens or have a representative who comes from the South Asian community.

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The establishment and those who have

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2 ties to it, will attempt to divide our  
3 community and prevent our voting block  
4 from, you know, what happened  
5 previously. We've seen this. But we  
6 could say that the commission members  
7 and even judges, you know, they probably  
8 aren't political, but realistically  
9 everything is influenced by politics.  
10 And I know that some commission members  
11 might have some ties with the mayor and  
12 current or past city council members,  
13 but for that reason, I request that the  
14 Commission uses integrity and  
15 recognition of the reason that they are  
16 serving the Commission today, and the  
17 responsibility they have on making maps  
18 that help address the needs of the  
19 marginalized immigrant communities that  
20 have been severely underfunded,  
21 underrepresented, and underserved,  
22 especially because New York City is  
23 considered the most diverse place in the  
24 world, in terms of culture, with over  
25 six hundred languages spoken here.

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2           The lack of immigration resources  
3           and the lack of language accessibility  
4           that surprisingly, even to this day  
5           have, you know, deeply impacts  
6           marginalized communities, including that  
7           of the South Asian community here in  
8           District 24 and a new South Asian-led  
9           district with new representation to help  
10          address all this. And we have a huge  
11          South Asian voting block here in City  
12          Council District 24. It extends down to  
13          City Council District 23 and I do have a  
14          proposed map and I wish I could get to  
15          share it on screen, but I'll be trying  
16          to upload it online here, that  
17          encompasses what changes that I'd like  
18          to address.

19                Because elected officials, both from  
20                past and present know that the South  
21                Asian community has been moving up and  
22                hadn't been giving power by not allowing  
23                this community to be heard and receiving  
24                proper representation it deserves. And  
25                often South Asian communities tokenize

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2 and you see elected officials meet with  
3 us when it's for photo ops but not  
4 necessarily when we need resources that  
5 would help address their needs. These  
6 same city council members decide to  
7 prioritize and send more discretionary  
8 funds to our privileged, affluent white  
9 communities, rather than marginalized  
10 communities that are struggling.

11 We need representation from people  
12 who can truly understand the struggle of  
13 folks from marginalized immigrant  
14 communities, not someone who comes from  
15 privilege. That's how we solve -- help  
16 solve systemic issues that are against  
17 marginalized immigrant communities.

18 And yeah, we do not need anymore  
19 (unintelligible) politicians and even if  
20 we're stuck with them, we need  
21 marginalized immigrant communities to be  
22 able to hold them accountable and to be  
23 able to have a fair chance to have  
24 someone run against them without any  
25 more barriers by gatekeepers, who've

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prevented marginalized communities from being uplifted.

And I hope the Redistricting Commission reflects on all this and from the 2021 Redistricting Commission as well, on what mistakes were made in the past and how can we make this process more transparent and inclusive, a more fair way for us to make a new district for each of our communities here, and something that would actually also adhere to the Voting Rights Act 1965 because there's so much at stake and a lot of communities are in need of help and this is the way to properly address that. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Dan Miller. Is Dan Miller available virtually?

If not, we'll go back in-person.

George and -- George, but then also Valerie Johnson. Maybe they're together, the Ravenswood Residents

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Association.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: They left. Okay.  
Carol Wilkins.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did not  
attend.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

Is it Pharati?

Pharati?

Myran Swabi.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hold on, one second.

Thank you very much for your help.

Juan Manzala (phonetic). Okay,  
thank you.

And then following, Juan, I'll see  
if the person's here, Lisa McClaren.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I say a  
few words?

CHAIR WALCOTT: No, not right now,  
sir. We have a long list of people  
still, with all due respect.

Yes, sir.

JUAN MANZALA: Good evening. My

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name is Juan Manzala and I have been a Ridgewood, Queens resident for more than twenty years.

Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to speak today. As a son of immigrants, I speak today on behalf and many undocumented families and individuals who are scared to lift their voice and come out of the shadows. To the Committee, I hope you made the best decision about these maps because your decisions will impact my community for the next ten years. During the Corona Virus pandemic, I helped establish a food pantry in Ridgewood, where hundreds of Latino families received food. To my knowledge, the food pantry was the first community food pantry in Ridgewood and it helped many families during the Corona Virus pandemic.

Ridgewood is a community that houses many immigrants and undocumented families that are mostly Latinos. Ridgewood families come from Ecuador,

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Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Honduras and many Latino countries. Recently, hundreds of families who speak Kichwa have migrated from Ecuador to Ridgewood, Queens.

Queens is said to be the most diverse borough in New York City and Ridgewood is a true reflection of diverse language and cultures.

The last census numbers are very challenging. President Trump was able to place a great amount of fear in the census process, so families did not want to provide information to the census. I saw this firsthand because I did work for the census and Latino families were very hesitant to provide answers to me. The census was also during a global pandemic, therefore, many families did not want to interact and provide answers. I know we must work with what we have, but the numbers that are being used today are not an accurate reflection of my neighborhood.

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Therefore, dividing Ridgewood into three council districts means we are dividing many families, especially families who need the most support.

Your decision of the new maps will establish how much resources working families will receive. The latest maps of the 34th District put Ridgewood families in a difficult positions. The 34th District already has 7 NYCHA developments in Brooklyn. Therefore, adding three more developments will take away resources from Ridgewood families, which will impact them negatively. Furthermore, Ridgewood is a community where blessed organizations and nonprofits support families. Thus, the only resources that Ridgewood relies on is the representation of the City Council officials. To divide Ridgewood will only cause Ridgewood to be less important for elected officials, and burying them from getting the help that they need to survive in this city of

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those three districts it is being divided into.

District 34 already represents a supportive and active Latino population and it makes the most sense for my community to be supported by a district that puts their needs first. Ridgewood is composed of mainly rent-stabilized apartments. Developers profit from tenants and displace them, especially Latino families. After the pandemic, we are entering a housing crisis and the new maps will reinforce developers to displace Ridgewood families because families will not be reunited and unorganized.

On the other hand, District 34 represents four local schools. For so long, our Ridgewood schools have been divided. When a student graduates from a District 34 school, they are zoned to a school in the 30th district. Elected officials should work with schools and parents to support students. Therefore,

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expanding the 34th district upward in Ridgewood will allow our Ridgewood schools to be represented by one councilmember.

The map should unite and establish a community that is represented by a leader that is able to prioritize their needs. Historically, District 34 has always fulfilled their goal for working for Latino families. My advice to the border is the 34th District represent more Latino families in Ridgewood. If the 34th District represents more of Queens, it will combine a population and keep the community together. If the 34th District expands more into Queens, it will allow communities, such as the LGBTQ Plus, doctor recipients, advocates for street safety, undocumented families, tenant advocates, and Latin families to organize and work together for a better Ridgewood. Please consider extending the lines upward to Forest Avenue or Fresh Pond and over to 60th

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Lane, looping back down at Myrtle Avenue.

As a longtime Ridgewood resident, I truly believe that our current councilmember is the best person to represent more of Ridgewood and the best person to represent communities that were forgotten. And even when the current councilmember changes, this district will always have the knowledge and passion to bring community groups and resources that can benefit Ridgewood families.

I want to finish by saying, dividing immigrant communities, the people who kept working during the pandemic, is not the answer. Division is never the answer. Unity is. Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, sir.

Next in-person, Eva Tompson.

Derrick McCall.

Mark Pappas.

I'm sorry, Derrick McCall.

But if Mark Pappas and Diana

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Zeramana are here, then follow --

DERRICK MCCALL: Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Derrick McCall and I'm a resident of Astoria for 29 years, in the same apartment four blocks from here.

I rarely come out to testify at hearings, but the proposed lines for District 26 are so horrible and so wrong that I'm here tonight to register my rage, my shock and my disappointment and to speak in opposition, strong opposition, to this map.

We already have the new State Senate District. The special master has put Astoria with the East Side in a district where we're going to have wealthy East Siders running to be our senator in Astoria. We don't want to compound this a second time by having our City Council District have the same situation.

The new line shift me from Tiffany Caban's District 22, where I've lived for close to three decades to District

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26. This is a good thing. Southern Astoria, Long Island City, Sunnyside and Woodside, they're very similar, but we need to make certain that we keep Woodside together and Sunnyside together. These two communities are basically the same community. Everything we do, we do together and we shouldn't be separated. So please keep us together and please fix this mistake, thank you.

(Applause).

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony. Are you Diana?

DIANA ZERAMANA: (Speaking in Spanish).

I want to try in English.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Sure.

DIANA ZERAMANA: My name is Diana Zeramana. I'm living in 34 City Council District. We represent a section of Ridgewood and Queens. Today I have come -- coming to testifying about the 34th District. I have been a Ridgewood

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2 resident for 12 years. The 34th  
3 District should be spend (sic) in  
4 Ridgewood more because the 34th District  
5 represent part of Ridgewood in Queens  
6 and Bushwick and Brooklyn. Bushwick and  
7 Ridgewood share similar concern.  
8 Ridgewood and Bushwick show the union  
9 there before the 34th (unintelligible)  
10 shall be expand more in Ridgewood.  
11 Ridgewood is made of mostly of Hispanic,  
12 Latino families and it's making sense to  
13 keeping the families together, not by  
14 dividing them, thank you.

15 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much  
16 for your testimony.

17 Is it Tania Sorino.

18 Are you Tania? Just double  
19 checking, okay. Thank you.

20 And then following Tania, is Claudia  
21 Nunez and then Mohammed Sarwar.

22 MS. SPEAKER: (Speaking in Spanish.)

23 MR. SPEAKER: The lady forgot her  
24 glasses at home, so she could not read  
25 her own speech. So I'm going to read it

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in Spanish and then in English.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Can you do it in English right now and then, if there is a demand for Spanish then, we'll speak to that.

My name is Tania and I live in District Council number 34, which represents a section of Ridgewood, Queens. I've come to give my testimony on District 34. I've been a resident of Ridgewood for 20 years. District 34 must expand towards Ridgewood because District 34 represents parts of Ridgewood in Queens and Bushwick in Brooklyn. Therefore, Bushwick and Ridgewood would share similar concerns.

Ridgewood and Bushwick must maintain united. Therefore, District 34 must expand towards Ridgewood. Ridgewood is made up particularly of Hispanic, Latin families who have a sense of unity and these families must remain united instead of divided.

For a long time, Ridgewood has been

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divided in two areas that divide the community or that severed the community. The new maps will divide Ridgewood even further into three seats. I think that to continue and to expand such divisions, will damage the working class families of Ridgewood.

If you add more NYCHA buildings in District 34, you will withdraw time and resources to the families of Ridgewood that already need help.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much. Claudia Nunez?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay. Thank you. Is it Mohammed Sarwar?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, thank you. Caesar Ruiz.

Following Caesar would be Jerry Batalana (phonetic).

CAESAR RUIZ: Thank you, Commissioner. I'm going to try to be brief. I had a much longer one, but

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you're all tired and so I'll make it quick and easy.

Greetings, Commissioner. My name is Caesar Ruiz. I'm a legal fellow and attorney at Latino Justice, Latino Justice, a civil rights organization, that served the Latino community throughout the nation for the past 50 years. We are members on the Unity Coalition along CLSJ. We work to represent the interests of Latino, Black and Asian community members. To simply put, we urge the Commission to adopt the Unity Map in full. Our map is a product of deep community engagement and discussion as a reflection of their voices.

I'm all about easy fixes, especially this late at night, so I'll share a few key points of our suggestions.

Adopt the Unity Map because it keeps Woodside, Sunnyside whole and it maintains District 26 exclusively in Queens, as you've heard extensive

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2 testimony tonight. Adopt the Unity Map  
3 because it doesn't (unintelligible) the  
4 city maps. We cross District 49 into  
5 South Brooklyn to ensure flexibility  
6 across the city recognizing that the  
7 City Charter mandates this, as do the  
8 demographic shifts among the districts  
9 across the five boroughs. Now  
10 apportionment. Why? The first  
11 question -- the first issue is that it  
12 violates the City Charter, the first  
13 criteria, which means that you can't  
14 under populate certain districts at the  
15 expense of other districts and that's  
16 clearly what we see what you have three  
17 wholly contained districts in Staten  
18 Island. The second is it doesn't match  
19 the demographic growth. Staten Island  
20 is the smallest borough and it has only  
21 500K residents, and it has the lowest  
22 growth rate at only 27,000. So that  
23 presents huge mal apportionment  
24 concerns.

25 Lastly, if anything is clear,

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2 coalition districts must be protected.  
3 We're not a city that is just Asian,  
4 Latino or Black. We're a diverse city  
5 that is served by a diverse body in  
6 coalition districts that have performed  
7 for communities of color, and must be  
8 protected and maintained. The most  
9 egregious example of disrupting  
10 coalition districts, is City Council  
11 District in the preliminary map 38,  
12 which removes large set -- which removes  
13 Red Hook and a large chunk of Sunset  
14 Park, dismantling a performing coalition  
15 district. While we endeavor to create  
16 new majorities where possible, we don't  
17 do so at the expense of disrupting  
18 performing coalition districts like 26  
19 or 38. We're disrupted by issues of our  
20 apportionment and the creation of the  
21 new majority that splits the community  
22 of interest of Sunset Park. We kind of  
23 accept the carrot of City Council  
24 District 43 having been beaten by the  
25 stick of unjust past redistricting

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cycles, which have pitted our communities against one another and cause us all to suffer.

Simply put, these changes not only exacerbate existing issues, but disturb deep organizing connections within these communities. Once again, I urge for the full adoption of the Unity Map. And I thank you for your time.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you.

JERRY GUATAMALA: Good evening, my name is Jerry Guatamala. I'm the director of the Democracy Program at the Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, ALDEF. We are a member of the Asian-American AAPA Voice Redistricting Task Force, as well as a member of the Unity Map Coalition, which submitted the Unity Map to you.

Some comments on the Commission's draft map, as mentioned by my colleague, Caesar, it is problematic to start with Staten Island. You should not be starting with Staten Island. Staten

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Island should not be dictating the rest of the map, the other 48 districts.

(Applause.)

The City Charter gives you a prioritized list that you must follow. Number two on that list is making sure there's fair and effective representation for language and racial minority groups protected under the Federal Voting Rights Acts. That means Black, Latino and Asian communities. You have to start there before you look at places like Staten Island and other communities of interest. What's problematic also, as mentioned, performing coalition districts are protected by the Federal Voting Rights Act. You cannot dismantle those performing coalition districts, meaning the Asian and Latino populations when combined that are over 50 percent, that are electing people of color, you cannot dismantle that and replace that with plurality white districts, especially

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2 when the white population in Queens  
3 decreased by 30 percent. This does not  
4 make sense. You should be looking at  
5 the census data and these new lines  
6 should be reflecting the census data,  
7 not turning them on their heads, not  
8 dismantling performing coalition  
9 districts; one of them that elected the  
10 first Korean-American to City Council  
11 and replacing it with a white plurality  
12 district in the face of the City Charter  
13 and the population demographic from the  
14 last census.

15 Also, I would say, with District 32,  
16 27, 28, 31, we know those are performing  
17 Black districts. The Unity Map turns 28  
18 into a majority Black district. So then  
19 you would have three majority Black  
20 districts -- well then, what about  
21 Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park? That  
22 is a protected community of interest,  
23 it's Asian-American community of  
24 interest. It is a group protected under  
25 the Federal Voting Rights Act and you

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must first ensure that there is fair and effective representation for that community before you look at Howard Beach and Breezy Point and Broad Channel and those other areas that you've drawn and consolidated into District 32.

What about Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park? You've lumped them together in 28 with Rochdale Village, where they have no opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice. Again, I would argue that's a violation of the Charter.

Before you move on, after the three Black districts in 27, 28, and 31, you must then next look at Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and make sure they have fair and effective representation. What does that look like? That's the Unity Map District 32. It allows them for the first time to have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.

We also make sure that Woodside was kept whole in City Council District 26; you heard a lot about that.

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(Applause.)

We submitted our --

(Applause.)

-- communities of interest to you.

16 Asian-American communities of interest. You have the boundaries. You know what we're talking about when we're talking about these neighborhoods. At the top of our list when we were doing the Unity Map, Woodside, we wanted to make sure they were kept whole; Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, they have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice and to keep Bensonhurst whole -- we'll talk about that more at the Brooklyn hearing. But we want to see a map that complies with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the City Charter and is the most equitable for the communities of color that are protected under the Federal Voting Rights Act, that is the Unity Map. I ask you adopt that in full, thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your

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testimony.

Next, we're going back to virtual.

Is it Salima Ashraf Islam?

SALIMA ISLAM: Hello. My name is Salima Ashraf Islam and I am one of the founding member and director of cultural organization called Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts, short -- known to everybody BIPA. And I have been serving this organization for 30 years and through this organization I'm serving those area mostly Astoria, LIC, Sunnyside, Woodside, those are the area mostly for the Bangladeshi young generation. We teach them culture and everything and we perform a lot of culture shows. Not only in our community, we do that to spread in different libraries and different mainstream shows. And we have been working together as a powerful community. But during this redistricting this area, it's really concern me and I don't think this is a

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good idea redistricting this area.  
Because as a big community, we are very  
powerful and we can stop a lot of  
people. And that's why I'm just  
thinking that redistricting this area is  
not a good idea to go. Thank you very  
much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
your testimony.

Next on Zoom is --

MS. SPEAKER: Good evening, salaam  
alaikum.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Alaikum salaam.

MS. SPEAKER: Thank you for the  
opportunity to speak tonight. And I am  
on Board of Director of Woodside on the  
Move. I'm also member of National  
Alliance for Filipino Concern and  
recently I became part of the Asian  
Advisory Council of the New York City  
Mayor. And also I founded  
(unintelligible) a nonprofit cultural  
organization that brings legends, epics  
and meets and southern history of

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Southern Philippines to the world, actually relating us to the rest of the immigrant heritage, what ancient ancestral Sanskrit history and the history of the Philippines.

And the reason why I would like to testify is because I'm very concerned. I came here in America as an Immigrant Nurse in 1990s to fill in the under stocking HIV/AIDS and I served two front lines during the COVID pandemic presently. And Redistricting Council District 26 is very scary for us, Asian population, our population here in Queens that gives Queens the beauty, the vibration and also the healing effect of the community.

For example, during the height of COVID 19, we nurses in the hospital cannot go home to our family because we don't want to carry that virus home. So it's the restaurants of Little Manila, their chef or their cook, goes to the restaurant and cook food, cultural food

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for us and bring it to the hospital so that we nurses, can eat and be nourished and we can serve the epicenter of the epicenter.

Now Woodside, Queens is currently -- District 26, currently incorporates Sunnyside, Woodside, Long Island City and parts of Astoria and this would undergo significant change if the map were to go into effect.

The new District 26 map would see much more of Astoria removed along with Queensbridge and Ravenswood unfolding into District 22. Most of Woodside also would be gone with portions of it falling into District 30 and District 25.

Currently District 26, the population is 29 percent non-Hispanic, white, 31 percent Asian, 29 percent Hispanic and 6 percent Black. If this were to divide, it will go to 44 percent white non-Hispanic, and 25 percent Asian, and 2 percent Hispanic and 4

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percent Black.

Anyhow, what is scary is if you go to divide it into four, this fractures our impact to the community. Like we will lose our leader who understand the community.

Currently, our District Council person in Woodside is -- has gone in Woodside. A young woman was immersed in the community and is able -- Julie Won but she is very much responding to us, to our needs in the community. And one thing that I'm very concerned is, Little Manila, as I had related to you our story during COVID time that Little Manila is a little hub for the Philippines in Queens and that is where you can see the visibility of the Filipinos.

We've seen our culture and you can come any time and say you have visited Philippines in Queens in that little corner of Queens that will become invisible. We are already invisible.

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We, Filipinos, serve in the healthcare industry for centuries and we, I think, you can witness yourself if you have been in the hospital or in healthcare that we have served with most compassion.

Now --

CHAIR WALCOTT: If you can start to wrap up, please.

MS. SPEAKER: We're already invisible and if Little Manila will be impacted in this redistricting, well it's a sign that we are not really being cared for. In 2015, there was an attempt --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Excuse me. Ma'am, ma'am, excuse me. With all due respect, because we still have many speakers to speak and we need to have you wrap up, please.

MS. SPEAKER: Wrapping up.

I'm finding myself -- in 2015, there was an attempt of gentrifying Woodside and that is our fear right now. If we

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are -- if there will be -- if Woodside will be divided into four, we would totally be erased in the map of Queens or New York City. So we are opposed to the new Redistricting --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

MONSIGNOR SULLIVAN: Could we have a timeline?

CHAIR WALCOTT: And in response to the Monsignor's question, we had an over, as you can tell, subscription of people who wanted to testify. And while it is officially listed as 9:00 for closing, we were able to work with the local councilmember to stay in the venue as long as we need it.

So we understand that people are on a fixed schedules and we respect that but we're also trying to be respectful of the individuals who have definitely come forward to testify both in-person and virtually. So that's the balancing act we're trying to achieve.

MONSIGNOR SULLIVAN: So in other

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words, we don't have an end time.

CHAIR WALCOTT: An end time, no.

MONSIGNOR SULLIVAN: Okay.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Again, we understand that people are on schedule so we are respectful, but I will be here.

Next is Rosalyn Spegner, Chris Collins and Bihari Law.

Okay. Maritza Cordenez, is it Michelam Misker (phonetic).

Halley Kim.

I know I saw this name pop up earlier, Jay Williams.

Halley Kim is in-person. I have him listed as Zoom.

JAY WILLIAMS: Jay Williams is on Zoom.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hold on, one second, Mr. Williams.

HALLEY KIM: Hi. Sorry.

CHAIR WALCOTT: No, no. Don't apologize. That's okay.

HALLEY KIM: Hi, everyone. My name is Halley Kim. I'm here with the

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MinKwon Center for Community Action, but  
I'm also here as a 23-year resident of  
Sunnyside, Queens and a very proud one  
at that.

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So I'm here to ask that in the  
redistricting process, we keep Sunnyside  
and Woodside together in City Council  
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I want to reemphasize the  
unwieldiness of a 2-borough district and  
the lack of necessity to do so looking  
at the census data because we can keep  
District 26 a Queens District. For as  
long as I've known, Sunnyside and  
Woodside have been in the same City  
Council District. I live in Sunnyside,  
my grandparents live in Woodside, we've  
always had the same councilmember and  
it's kind of been a point of pride for  
me and a way for them to get information  
on who to vote for.

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We've also been able to kind of keep  
the multicultural, multiethnic and more  
importantly, the socioeconomically

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2 diverse district that we're all proud to  
3 be a part of. I think it is a point of  
4 pride for a lot of us here. To tear  
5 these two communities apart electorally  
6 and instead add parts of Manhattan is to  
7 solely look at the skylines of Long  
8 Island City, assume that this is what  
9 the entire community looks like and  
10 erase what makes this district so  
11 special. Thank you.

12 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you.

13 Jay Williams.

14 JAY WILLIAMS: Jay Williams. I am  
15 the General Manager of Rochdale Village  
16 located in South Jamaica, Queens.  
17 Before that, I was the Assisting General  
18 Manager of Rochdale Village for nine and  
19 a half years, and lived here -- while  
20 I've only lived here for eight years. I  
21 started my family at Rochdale.

22 I just want to begin by saying that  
23 I do not think that the part of District  
24 28 containing the one community of  
25 Rochdale Village should be split into

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2 two separate districts. Upon examining  
3 the City Charter Section 52 Part C of  
4 the district plan and Part F, redistrict  
5 lines should be kept intact  
6 neighborhoods and the communities with  
7 established ties of common interests and  
8 association, whether historical, racial,  
9 economic, ethnic, religious or other.  
10 So Rochdale Village has been an  
11 established community for sixty years as  
12 the first, the largest Mitchell-Lama at  
13 the time containing over 25,000  
14 residents. They're governed by a board  
15 of 15 members that are duly elected by  
16 the residents that reside here.

17 While our compass spans 170 acres,  
18 we are one community that share common  
19 interests, share leases, maintenance  
20 staff, rules and regulations. The  
21 proposed district lines cuts through our  
22 community and even goes as far as to cut  
23 through one of our buildings, which  
24 seems like a gross violation of this  
25 particular section, Section F. I'd like

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to reference that as well; that districts should not be drawn for the purpose of separating geographic concentrations of voters enrolled in the same political party into two or more districts in order to diminish the effective representation of such voters.

So just to piggyback upon what I mentioned before, with regard to Rochdale Village and its timeframe of over sixty years, again, the district line cuts through our building across our grounds, through our community center, which doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, even from a layman's perspective.

That's just to say if someone has a problem in a building that's been cut in half and it's a systemic problem, one neighbor has to go to one district for help and the other neighbor has to go to the other for help, which doesn't seem to make any sense to us.

And with regard to the lines in

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general, when I examined the drawing, I see that most of the lines follows streets as natural barriers between one district to another. Again, this one cuts across, right across our grounds, right across our buildings, which doesn't seem right.

So with that being said, I'd like to again repeat, I do not think that part of District 28 containing one community of Rochdale should be split in two pieces. Thank you very much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you, sir.

Herbert Rivera.

Maria Jean-Pierre.

Okay. We're back in-person and the hour is really late, but we are always going to be respectful of the people who want to testify and who signed up beforehand. So if you can really keep your remarks within the timeline, I think that would be extremely helpful to all of us. Thank you very much.

Thomas Murowski.

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THOMAS MUROWSKI: Thank you. My name is Thomas Murowski. I live in Liberty Park, which is a section of Glendale. I'm here to voice my objection to the City's redistricting, which removes a small section of Glendale from District 30 and places it into District 32.

I've lived in Liberty Park for 32 years and was the past president of the Liberty Park Homeowners Association for about fifteen years. My objection to the proposed redistricting is based on numerous, sound reasons and includes the following:

First reason is, our community will be detached from the rest of District 32 for about three quarters to a mile, well actually be adjoined to the remainder of the district by cemeteries and a park. I don't consider that joining. Cemeteries divide a neighborhood.

Secondly, Liberty Park is part of Community Board 5, which also covers

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Middle Village, the rest of Glendale, parts of Ridgewood and Maspeth. We participate in events sponsored by or occurring in these areas. In fact, the Community Board 5 office is right down the block from where we live. In fact, we go there to voice our complaints in-person.

Our bonds with other communities that I just mentioned, is through organizations such as little leagues, churches. Well, the proposed district's districting breakup, will break these bonds. As presently drawn, District 30 is a compact district; it's a couple miles across, and a couple miles, north and South. If you place us into District 32, we will be the -- the boundaries are about ten to twelve miles apart. This is ridiculous.

Our police precinct is the 104th Police Precinct. We utilize our District Councilman to get representation at our local meetings.

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When they don't appear, we let our councilmember hear about it. So without our local councilman who knows this area, a new councilmember will have to be introduced to the new captain or whatever and coordinate with the police.

In fact, our current representative, Bob Holden, knows the area and he is very familiar -- in fact, I can tell you honestly, since I've been active in the homeowners' association for years, every one of our past council members have been familiar with our area and have been very, very familiar with our issues.

In fact, a few months ago, you may have seen in on the news. At the intersection of Cypress Avenue and Cooper Avenue, a pedestrian was hit by a car not once, but twice. And we called up Bob Holden, he arranged to have a press conference, he got the DOT commissioner, I think his name is Rodriguez, and that -- they got changes

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implemented at that intersection with the lighting, signage. It looks like, you know, it has improved. This is the kind of representation that we expect from our council --

CHAIR WALCOTT: Please start to wrap it up.

THOMAS MUROWSKI: I'm trying to keep this -- that's about the end of my speech. Like I said, we don't want to be detached from the rest of the district that we are in right now. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you, sir. Kwaneek Kaur (phonetic).

Maritza Sasah (phonetic).

Jane Margaratin (phonetic).

Elizabeth O'Young.

Following Elizabeth O'Young is Mohammed Ahmed, Foranza Linda and then Elsa Kotar (phonetic).

ELIZABETH O'YOUNG: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Elizabeth O'Young. I'm a coordinator at APA

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Redistricting Task Force, the largest of Asian-American redistricting coalition of 21 leading civic engagement groups throughout the city.

Following the release of the Commission's draft map, an article in Politico, dated July 27, 2022, alleged New York City Council's minority leader, whose district is in Staten Island, influence the Commission's draft map. The draft map prioritizes Staten Island which represents 5.6 percent of the city's population over 94.4 percent of the city's residents. If this article is true, backdoor deals make a mockery of democracy. We, the public, are not in a position to comment on the veracity of this article. But it remains perplexing how three districts in Staten Island, the borough that experienced the least population growth over the last decade of all five boroughs, could restrict the size of the rest of the 48 districts in New York City.

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2           The needs of Staten Island must be  
3 balanced with where the population has  
4 grown more; and that's in Brooklyn,  
5 Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx,  
6 respectively. Otherwise, millions of  
7 New York City residents, including those  
8 supposed to be protected by the Voting  
9 Rights Act, are being stripped of an  
10 opportunity for fair representation.

11           We applaud Commissioner Judge Go for  
12 publicly recognizing this glaring  
13 injustice and by abstaining from voting  
14 on this draft map. We hope the  
15 Commission's final maps will rectify  
16 this gross imbalance and restore the  
17 public's confidence in this  
18 redistricting process.

19           The same Politico article also  
20 mentioned a different map the Commission  
21 drew that did not have all three  
22 districts contained within Staten  
23 Island, but this draft map was not  
24 released to the public. To ensure  
25 transparency, we ask the Commission to

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please release the map immediately, this map, this draft map, that was not given to the public, for review and comment prior to the Commission submitting a revised map to the City Council.

Without access to this undisclosed alternative draft map by the Commission, our task force members last night voted to support the Unity Map for City Council. The Unity Map so far is the map that best keeps the sixteen Asian-American communities of interest in New York City whole.

For Queens Unity Map keeps Woodside, including Little Manila, whole in District 26, keeps the APA community of interest in Elmhurst whole in District 25, considers the growth and APA population in Northern Flushing in District 20 and creates a plurality APA district in Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park in District 32.

At the upcoming hearings, our task force members will testify how the Unity

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Map keeps the APA communities of interest whole in Brooklyn and in Manhattan. Thank you very much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Mohammed Ahmed.

MOHAMMED AHMED: Hi. Good afternoon, Commissioners. I first want to start by echoing the Liz's sentiments around Staten Island. It is important for us to have equity in this redistricting process and we are not having that with Staten Island.

My name is Mohammed Ahmed. I am a proud, Indo-Caribbean queer Muslim and Southeast Queens resident, a homeowner, organizer and community member of Richmond Hill. I'm also the founder and executive director of the Caribbean Equality Project, a community-based organization that advocates for and represents Black and brown Caribbean LGBTQ immigrants in New York City.

For the past decade, I have

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witnessed the growth and development of my community, little Guyana in Richmond Hill and Little Punjab in South Ozone Park, are home to New York City's thriving South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in Queens.

Currently, these communities of interest are unjustifiably divided into three City Council Districts, 28, 29, and 32. These district lines have diluted our political power, vote and voice for decades. The progress in these neighborhoods began in the 60s and 70s with migration of people from Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; to just name a few countries.

Today, you can buy your bread from Sybil's at Liberty Avenue and 132nd Street, go to Jum'ah prayers on Fridays at Masjid Al-Abidin, shop for cultural groceries, clothing and religious items along Liberty Avenue and 101st Avenue, play Holi at Smokey Park, the Sikh

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community can safely worship at a Gurdwara located on 113th Street playing and 101st Avenue, and the Hindu community can attend prayers you (unintelligible) Mandir located at 101st Street and 97th Avenue.

These historical locations are all within fifteen minutes drive of each other and within the natural boundaries of Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, which are Woodhaven Boulevard to the west, Jamaica Avenue to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east and the South Conduit to the South.

What you won't find in these South Asian and Indo-Caribbean neighborhoods, is single City Council District office. These neighborhoods are also home to Richmond Hill and John Adams High School, hundreds of thriving small businesses and thousands of residential houses that deserves an equitable political representation.

The Commission's proposed map for

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2 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park  
3 further divide my community into five  
4 City Council Districts. If you look at  
5 your map, you will see that Richmond  
6 Hill and South Ozone Park are divided  
7 amongst City Council District 27, 28,  
8 29, 31 and 32. This is not what many of  
9 us have testified in-person and  
10 virtually asked for. We boldly ask for  
11 our community of interest to be kept  
12 whole in a single, compact district.

13 Redistricting is a racial justice of  
14 human rights and a quality of life  
15 issue.

16 Each new City Council District you  
17 create, should reflect the population  
18 growth of these neighborhoods. There  
19 should be equity in your process. What  
20 you have collectively proposed for  
21 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, is  
22 the definition of political  
23 disenfranchisement and racial  
24 gerrymandering.

25 Our diverse and intersectional

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communities can no longer be ignored, underfunded and underresourced, not by this Commission or any other sitting elected official.

Today I am calling on the New York City Redistricting Commission to hear our voices and bring justice to Richmond Hill. We deserve equity in the New York City Redistricting process; we deserve to be kept whole and protected under the Voting Rights Act. We deserve fair and equitable maps, we deserve to be united and not divided.

You have the political power to end decades of gerrymandering and political violence in Southeast Queens. Give us a fighting chance to emerge from the COVID 19 pandemic, a more politically resilient community. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you.

Feronza Linzer.

After Feronza Linzer, Lisa Ahtar.  
(Phonetic).

LISA AHTAR: I'm Lisa. I'm actually

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going to go first. Feronza and I are part of the same organization.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

LISA AHTAR: My name is Lisa Ahtar. I'm a longtime resident and voter in Richmond Hill Council District 28. I work at Chhaya CDC, a member organization of APA Voice Redistricting Task Force. Chhaya is a 22 year-old community organization located in Jackson Heights and Richmond Hill serving the Indo-Caribbean and South Asian communities across Queens; including Elmhurst, Woodside, Jackson Heights, Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park. Bangladeshis, Guyanese, Nepalis and Tibetans, Punjabis and other Indians, Trinidadians and more, make up this richly diverse yet, cohesive diaspora. Chhaya works to build housing stability, economic well-being and the power of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities by providing housing counseling for tenants and homeowners,

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financial counseling, free tax prep and immigration services.

Over the last two decades, this community has been and continues to be severely underserved while facing some of the hardest housing and economic issues in New York City. Chhaya believes the following district lines will allow for our communities to be whole. For Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, the natural lines are Woodhaven Boulevard to the west, Jamaica Avenue to the north, Van Wyck Expressway to the east and Conduit Avenue to the south, which keep the communities of interest together.

In Woodside, we oppose the Commission's draft map for Woodside as it divides the Asian Community into many districts and puts the significantly Asian part of Woodside in District 30. This includes the Filipino, Nepalese, Tibetan and Bangladeshi communities.

The APA community in Woodside has

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little to no commonalities with District 30. We would like to see Woodside remain whole in District 26 and we support the Unity Map for Woodside, as it does this.

In Elmhurst, we appreciate and commend the Commission in keeping Elmhurst whole in District 25. We hope this part of the map is maintained.

The South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities share deep cultural, commercial, religious and linguistic connections in Council Districts 25, 28 and 32. In these districts, over the last two decades, deep ties were strengthened within the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities.

During the post-911 backlash, when our Muslim and city community members were targeted, our entire communities came together to support each other. During the pandemic when mutual aid groups comprised of Bangladeshi, Punjabi and Indo-Caribbean members came together

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to address food insecurities and the need for PPE and testing sites. And recently, census outreach is another example of our communities coming together. Guyanese, Bangladeshis, Indians and Nepalis, all working together to ensure our communities were counted.

We urge the Redistricting Commission to ensure that the South Asians and Indo-Caribbeans in these key neighborhoods are no longer fractured, as they have been historically and finally have the opportunity to elect a candidate who truly represents their voices and needs. Our communities can no longer be invisible and divided, thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

FERONZA LINZER: My name is Feronza Linzer and I work at Chhaya CDC. I am a longtime resident, worker and voter in Council District 25. My family and I

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have lived in our two-family home in Woodside since 2003. My sister and her husband are renters in Elmhurst, with my niece and nephew attending a local daycare and public school in the area.

All of us collectively frequent Woodside, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights for work, family and friends, shopping, food, cultural events and services.

I support and commend the Commission for keeping Elmhurst whole in District 25, just like the Unity Map does, including many of the communities of interest that I grew up with together in the district, including Jackson Heights. The northern border of the proposed maps for District 25 does not extent far enough to Astoria Boulevard to include all of the South Asians who have shared interest in the district, but it does include many of the key institutions like the only local Punjabi and Bengali grocery mart that are within walking distance for those who live between

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Northern and Astoria Boulevard.

But we are still supportive of the proposed northern border and hope you will not bring the northern line down any further. Please continue to keep Elmhurst whole in District 25.

I do oppose the Commission's draft map that divides Woodside into many districts and puts parts of Woodside, including little Manila and the South Asian parts with District 30. Woodside, including Little Manila, should remain whole in District 26, just like the Unity Map does. The basis for these opinions is equally grounded in my experience growing up in these neighborhoods, and working at Chhaya as a student, volunteer and then teacher at the Islamic Center of Jackson Heights on 79th Street and 31st Avenue, which became our source, as well as for many others for community information and resources.

Jackson Heights was where we shopped

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2 for groceries, picked up news  
3 publications, attended street festivals  
4 and got our taxes done by people who  
5 could speak Bengali.

6 The APA community in Elmhurst and  
7 Jackson Heights share various commercial  
8 cultural corridors, as we mentioned  
9 earlier. The same can be said about the  
10 Filipino, Bangladeshi, Nepali and  
11 Tibetan community in Woodside. Many of  
12 us in these neighborhoods are homeowners  
13 and tenants who are working class, often  
14 times taxi drivers, construction  
15 workers, restaurant and hotel staff who  
16 work long hours struggling to pay off  
17 mortgage or rent. Many tenants rent in  
18 1 to 4-family homes, basement apartments  
19 or rent stabilized buildings. Both face  
20 rising housing costs, stagnant income  
21 and sit under the constant threat of  
22 displacement and gentrification. The  
23 APA community in these neighborhoods  
24 must be kept whole with the distinctions  
25 made earlier in order to preserve their

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2 community and homes. These  
3 neighborhoods and communities are my  
4 home and place of work, and I'm  
5 committed to seeing it grow and thrive.  
6 I hope the Commission will help us do  
7 that and ensure that our communities can  
8 get the representation and access we  
9 deserve and continue to have to fight  
10 for. Thank you so much.

11 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
12 your testimony.

13 Next is Tenzin Chin, John Baheya  
14 (phonetic) and then, Halley Kim.

15 TENZIN CHIN: Good evening. Can I  
16 just say this is way past my bedtime?  
17 So, I've been here since five o'clock.  
18 I'm not complaining. I just will --

19 CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you.

20 TENZIN CHIN: Well, thank you guys  
21 for sticking around. I didn't see any  
22 of you -- I think some of you took  
23 breaks -- bathroom breaks, I should say.

24 CHAIR WALCOTT: Now you're getting  
25 into TMI.

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TENZIN CHIN: Okay, I'll be brief.  
I'll be brief. So I missed the e-mail.  
Apparently, I'm in the 9:30 group. I  
didn't realize it. I was so excited to  
be here so I got here at 5:00.

It's almost five and a half hours,  
but my motivation for being here is very  
selfish. I'm here to speak on behalf of  
my community, the Tibetan-American  
community. So within that five hour  
duration, I almost left. As you can  
imagine, we're all human beings. It's  
like a grueling 5 hours long. So then,  
I had to reflect, right? It's kind of  
off script, like, you know, my -- kind  
of the Tibetan people have escaped  
political prosecution, religious  
prosecution. They came to countries  
like this so they can actually speak  
their mind without any fear of, you  
know, dying or getting killed. So for  
that, I just want to thank you guys for  
giving us space to voice our opinion and  
then also taking a lot of time to listen

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to us.

Okay. So to my point, I'm going to go off script because it's very late. It's time to go to bed. I luckily live ten minutes away, so hopefully none of you have to go more than an hour to get to your apartment or your home.

As I was saying, I'm a Tibetan-American. So our community is mostly -- predominantly resides in District 25 and most importantly District 26. As we know, in the new map District 26 has dramatically changed. So we're already kind of spread across like District 26 and 25, a little bit of 22, 29, 30. But now, with this new map, we're scattered across at least four to five different districts. We're a new community here. We're a minority within minority. We're Asian-American, we're part of the Himalayan group; so the Nepalese and Bhutanese, they already spoke, but you know, we want -- we built a lot of political capital and

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institutional relationship with District 26.

Before Julie Won, we were close to I think Councilmember Jim Brammer, you know, District 26, 25, now with Shaker -- Councilmember Shaker. So we don't want to lose that. We don't want to, you know, our community leaders are here right now. Hopefully they will speak as well. They're all volunteers, nobody gets paid within our community to, you know, to serve this community. Now you're asking us to do, you know, they have two part-time jobs, three full-time jobs and now, you're asking them, hey, you need to talk to four different council members -- five maybe. So this is totally unacceptable to us.

So with that, I'll just conclude with the -- maybe something close to your neck of the woods, Mr. Walcott. There is a Woodside library within District 26. I know you're part of the Queens Public Library, you're president.

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Within that, you know, you're kind of like, you're a noble cause, noble work there is an effort made within that library. A lot of Tibetan books are being translated in Tibet, that might be impacted because of the community.

So my conclusion is, please, I urge, you know District 26 be preserved as much as possible. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you as well and have a good night's sleep.

John Baheya.

JOHN BAHEYA: Hello to the Commissioners and staff of the Districting Commission. This is my third time testifying in front of the Commission for communities that I strongly advocate for, which is the Filipino community and Little Manila and the neighborhood of Woodside.

My name is John Baheya. I'm a proud Woodside resident and currently the community affairs associate at a local

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2 community nonprofit with Time to Move.  
3 I'm also a board member of Queens  
4 Community Board 2, whose  
5 responsibilities and services include  
6 the entire neighborhood of Woodside and  
7 covers almost all of the neighborhoods  
8 of Council District 26. I also attend  
9 CUNY LaGuardia Community College in Long  
10 Island City. So basically, I breathe  
11 live, work and have my education in  
12 Council District 26.

13 My identified community is  
14 Woodside's Little Manila, which  
15 stretches from 70th Street to 63rd  
16 Street along Roosevelt Avenue in  
17 Woodside. The preliminary map proposal  
18 released by the Commission is deeply  
19 concerning to me, as it divides up the  
20 communities of interest and fails to  
21 comply with the City Charter.

22 Woodside's split from the west of  
23 58th Street, including the loss of  
24 Woodside's green space and park, from  
25 the greater Woodside area, which is the

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2 Doughboy Park and Lawrence Virgilio  
3 playground and also parts of Woodside to  
4 the north of Broadway Avenue and above  
5 31st Avenue. And with the bulk of  
6 Woodside being incorporated with the  
7 neighborhoods of Maspeth, Middle  
8 Village, Ridgewood and Glendale, it thus  
9 creates a majority white district,  
10 dismantling a minority performing  
11 district. This new map also separates  
12 key transportation networks with also a  
13 known lack of investment public  
14 transportation in Council District 30,  
15 it would be very disadvantageous due to  
16 the day-to-day lives of Woodside  
17 commuters and working class families  
18 that rely on public transportation in  
19 Woodside, including Little Manila.

20 Woodside on the Move supports a  
21 Unity Map proposal with APA Voice  
22 Coalition and the new Unity Coalition  
23 members. We urge the Commission that  
24 the neighborhoods of Woodside and Little  
25 Manila should be kept whole to the

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extent possible and to remain in Council District 26.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to voice my community's concern and opinions on the preliminary map proposals, and we ask the Commission to not disenfranchise communities of interest, take away very important voter empowerment and disregard our longstanding communities. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Halley Kim.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He already left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

Farah Salam.

Sandra Choi.

I see someone running down the steps. Please don't run down the steps.

Hi. Good evening.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Good evening.

FARAH SALAM: I just wanted to ask, I've been seeing a lot of folks with

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their phones. A lot of people have been here all night and they're going to be here for the rest of the night. So I just hope that everyone is taking notes because, you know, a lot of people are here speaking passionately about their communities.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Just as a reminder, we're also having it transcribed as well. So we have a person that's in the front doing transcription.

FARAH SALAM: All right, great. Thank you.

So my name is Farah Salam and I live in District 26. I am a Bangladeshi-American. I live in Sunnyside.

Since the late 1970s, the Bangladeshi community members and families have been an integral part of Astoria, Woodside, Sunnyside and Long Island City in District 26. Over the last twenty, thirty years, we have also established small businesses in the

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neighborhood of Dutch Kills, Astoria on 36th Avenue and 30th Street, which we call Little Bangladesh.

Western Queens became a safe haven for Bangladeshis coming here after Bangladesh fell under authoritarian rule in the 1980s. As the country continued with the struggles, Bangladeshi immigrants made their homes in the current District 26 seeking economic and social stability. They not only established their homes here, they established their businesses, sent their children to school and created different community organizations.

We came here to seek and build autonomy and political power as we know what it is like to live without that community power. District 26 is our home. There are over 6,000 to 7,000 Bangladeshis living in District 26. We are the second largest -- we're the second largest growing community in New York City and we live here from in

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Sunnyside, Woodside, Long Island City and Astoria, from 36th Avenue to Woodside Avenue.

We celebrate our culture and our identities in so many different ways. We live, work and organize in District 26 for over the last 30 years. We are part of the same organization. The Astoria Welfare Society, the Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts, the Arab-American Family Support Center, the Taxi Workers Alliance and DRUM, they have all worked together. There are cultural and ethnic groups within District 26, in tandem with other immigrant groups, such as the Nepalis, Tibetans, the Arabs, Filipinos and many, many more Asian groups.

We ask that you keep us together in the district. If District 26, specifically Woodside, is divided into four council districts like the new maps proposed, it would disrupt the continuity of services, and flow of

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resources for our community.

For the first time ever, we have a council office that provides resources and translations in our language, Bangla. Before, whenever we would get city notices or anything and we read resources in Bangla, they would often be used through Google Translate or somebody would translate it in a way that's inaccessible. Right now, we have an office that provides those translations in an accessible way, in a way that most people can understand, and that not using Google Translate.

We also want to stay together within the Asian-American community of District 26, which the overall API population grew by 33 percent, according to the last census for District 26.

This preservation of our identity and political power relies on our unity, to have fair and effective representation by one councilmember. We are a racial and language minority group

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protected by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I strongly encourage and recommend that the Redistricting Commission makes sure that Woodside stays together, Long Island City, Sunnyside and Western Astoria, as it has been for the last thirty years.

Thank you so much and I hope you have a wonderful evening.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much.

What we were just checking on, before we get to you, Mohammed Ahmed, I know once spoke. Is there another Ahmed? No, okay.

Thank you, just double checking.

Are you Sandra Choi?

SANDRA CHOI: Yes, yes.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

SANDRA CHOI: Hi. Good evening. My name is Sandra. I'm here to represent MinKwon Center for Community Action. MinKwon established in 1984 and based in Flushing, Queens, serves and organizes working class Asian-American and

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Korean-American working class immigrants on civic, immigration and housing advocacy.

My personal ties to Flushing include I was born at Flushing Hospital. My parents bought their first home in Flushing about twenty years ago, where they still live today. And I also just want to mention MinKwon Center also convenes the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force, many of the members you're hearing from tonight.

MinKwon serves community members throughout the five boroughs but our community members are primarily based in the northeastern pocket of Queens, which stretches along Northern Boulevard commercial corridor, ten miles from downtown Flushing to Bell Boulevard, Bayside. Flushing's also a critical transportation corridor with the 7 Train Main Street Station, representing MTA's most northeastern stop in New York City. So we are a really important

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transportation hub. We connect Flushing to the rest of northeastern pockets of Queens, areas like Linden Hill, Murray Hill, Auburndale and Bayside.

2020 census data broken into neighborhood tabulation areas, show that the Asia-American community make up more than 50 percent in the aforementioned neighborhoods. In the borough of Queens, Asian-Americans make up about a quarter of the borough's residents and our communities experience about 13 percent growth over this past decade.

We know that lines represent power and the way that this Commission defined our borders will determine how policy moves, how resources are distributed and ultimately how our communities are represented in local government.

So two points I want to make tonight. We were surprised to see the Commission's proposed map lower the northern boundary of District 20 from 23rd Avenue to 29th Avenue. We ask that

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1  
2 the Commission restore the original  
3 boundary of the map that divides City  
4 Council District 19 and 20, the same way  
5 the Unity Map does. The Van Wyck  
6 Expressway should be the western  
7 boundary, Utopia Parkway, the eastern  
8 boundary, and similar maps that respect  
9 these boundaries also already exist,  
10 including one for Community Board 7 and  
11 the 109th police precinct.

12 Second point that I want to make  
13 tonight is that, you know, initially  
14 when I testified to this Commission a  
15 few months ago, I mentioned that the  
16 neighborhood of Murray Hill identified  
17 as Koreatown on the City Council's  
18 website's map, is divided into two. So  
19 the City Council map identifies Murray  
20 Hill as Koreatown. We don't call it  
21 that. The City Council district map  
22 does. So what we would like is for the  
23 Commission to do is to keep the  
24 neighborhood of Murray Hill whole and  
25 that the Unity Map's borders also

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reflects that.

So in conclusion, we would urge the Commission to adopt the borders of the Unity Map and thank you for your time today and hanging in there with us.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Is it Doe Han Kim (phonetic).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He had to go.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

Is it Sharob Robin?

Is it Shyam Karki?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He left.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

Raj Kopan.

So Raj Kopan and is Amrit Roca (phonetic) here?

If not, Romeo Hithal (phonetic).

Ellen Polavy (phonetic).

You'll be next after this current speaker coming up.

And then Ivan Mossop. Okay.

RAJ KOPAN: Hi, everyone. First, I want to say thank you for staying so

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late. I appreciate it because I had to get here late. I was putting my 7-month old daughter to bed first. So it's helpful that you had this late session for us -- or at least for me.

My name is Raj Kopan. I'm a resident of Rego Park in Central Queens. I'm also a professor in computer science and co-chair of the Central Queens Redistricting Coalition. The Central Queens Redistricting Coalition is a nonpartisan, diverse group of residents, organizers and activists of all different backgrounds, who are advocating for the neighborhoods of Rego Park, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill.

We reviewed your draft maps and we've also developed our own map of Queens that we feel resolves many of the issues that we found with your map and we'll be submitting that to you as well. Other members of our group will be testifying in other hearings.

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2 I want to just summarize some of the  
3 points. We were very happy to see  
4 District 29 keep much of Central Queens  
5 together. We believe that it keeps our  
6 communities of interest whole. But it  
7 appears that the consequence of that is  
8 splitting many of the neighborhoods that  
9 surround us, for example, Richmond Hill,  
10 has been split into multiple districts  
11 when it need not be. And the  
12 communities there deserve to have a  
13 single representative in the city  
14 council.

15 Another issue we found with the map  
16 is with Woodside being split into  
17 multiple districts. Again, this has  
18 been spoken to many times. We also take  
19 issue with the proposed District 32,  
20 which covers a very wide swath of  
21 geography and is very irregularly shaped  
22 and it separates communities that should  
23 be kept together that people have  
24 already spoken about.

25 What can we do about this? I think

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2 the solution is pretty straightforward.  
3 It is to not artificially force Staten  
4 Island to have three whole districts and  
5 lowering the population threshold across  
6 the rest of the city. Staten Island has  
7 not seen the same population growth as  
8 the rest of the city, and so their  
9 apportionment in the council should also  
10 decrease.

11 So we look forward to submitting our  
12 map of Queens and we will work with you  
13 if you have any input, but Central  
14 Queens should be kept whole. Thank you.

15 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
16 your testimony.

17 ELLEN POLAVY: Hi. I'm Ellen Polavy  
18 and I represent Roosevelt Island and we  
19 are -- we're a multi-ethnic,  
20 multi-cultural, multi-financial island  
21 that is very much a part of New York and  
22 I would like to introduce you to Olivia,  
23 Olivia Schaefer, who is going to be  
24 talking on my behalf today. She is one  
25 of the hyperactive Girl Scouts on

1  
2 Roosevelt Island. She's been a Girl  
3 Scout since the age of seven and she's  
4 going to tell you about how the Girl  
5 Scouts did something quite amazing on  
6 Roosevelt Island, how a community really  
7 works when it's part of the correct  
8 district and we're part of Manhattan  
9 District 5 and we'd like to stay that  
10 way.

11 OLIVIA SCHAEFER: Thank you,  
12 Chairman Walcott and members of the  
13 Commission. My name is Olivia Schaefer  
14 and I'm a young voice and voter on  
15 Roosevelt Island. I've lived there my  
16 whole life and I can probably say the  
17 community there is tight-knit and  
18 robust.

19 As part of that community, I worked  
20 as a Girl Scout alongside my mom, who is  
21 a troop leader, to build an even better  
22 community.

23 In 2015, roughly seven years ago, I  
24 helped rally votes to build a green roof  
25 on top of my middle school, P.S.I 217,

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2 as part of the New York City  
3 participatory budget. We were able to  
4 raise the most votes, and last year in  
5 November, the community opened the new  
6 green roof. That was only possible on  
7 Roosevelt Island as part of Manhattan  
8 working with District 5 Councilman Ben  
9 Kallos. It is so rewarding to help be a  
10 part of something that will last a  
11 lifetime. And for a lifetime, we have  
12 called ourselves Manhattanites, as we've  
13 made connections with the larger island.

14 After graduating P.S.I 217, I went  
15 to school in Midtown Manhattan, only  
16 four stops on the F Train. I know many  
17 other islanders that go to school or  
18 work or travel in and out of Manhattan  
19 using the commuter tram from Roosevelt  
20 Island. After middle school, most of my  
21 friends from the island went to  
22 Manhattan for high school, rather than  
23 Queens.

24 One thing that Queens could never  
25 understand about our special island is

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that it is a special island. Our larger sister island of Manhattan, understands the unique issues and all the environmental protections that we require. To be quite frank, I don't think Queens can handle the iconic Roosevelt Island and all its demands.

I know that we are a loud and active community and will fight for what's right. Also, I am not sure who decided to put a sliver Manhattan that's part of Queens -- I don't think that makes sense in my opinion.

When people ask me where I live, I proudly tell them I live on Roosevelt Island, which is a part of Manhattan. It has always been my home and after my parents recently bought their small piece of Manhattan there, hopefully Roosevelt Island, part of Manhattan, will be my home in the future. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you both for your testimony.

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ELLEN POLAVY: I was going to say, I brought a prop. This is a wetsuit. Just ingrain this in your memory. We can't swim across the river. We need to be part of Manhattan.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much. Ivan Mossop.

After Mr. Mossop, it's Dan Kaminsky and then Jonathan Esler.

IVAN MOSSOP: The quick brown fox. Okay.

Stop Rochdale Village from being drawn and quartered by the New York City Districting Commission.

Ladies and gentlemen of the New York City Districting Commission, I am Ivan D. Mossop Jr., New York State 32nd Republican Male Assembly District Leader. I reside in the 5th Congressional District, 10th Senatorial District and 32nd Assembly District.

I share these districts with all my fellow residents of Rochdale Village. Though the maps of these districts have

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recently changed, they have not been redrawn to divide our community. The entirety of Rochdale Village is and has for decades been in the 28th City Council District, currently represented by City Council Speaker Adams.

According to redistricting -- a new mapping resource created by the Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center of CUNY, the New York City Council preliminary plan would divide our community into the 28th and 27th City Council Districts. Specifically eight buildings out of our twenty buildings; Buildings 9-16 comprising two circles on Bedell Street, and one third of Building 7 would be in District 27.

According to the July 6, 2022 article of City & State New York, Anna McDonough, redistricting partners of a California-based firm that has also worked with the State Independent Redistricting Commission is working with the City's Commission to actually draw

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the maps. One might wonder if the decision to draw a district line through buildings, number seven, along with redistricting eight other buildings was made by either by a person possibly from California or a computer logarithm algorithm.

Rochdale Village Inc. Incorporated in 1960 and 1965 and completed in 1965, is the second largest cooperative village in the world. It's a Mitchell-Lama cooperative development with oversight and regulation from the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal intended to be affordable housing for moderate and middle-income residents. The boundaries of its 20 residential apartment buildings are Guy R. Brewer Boulevard, Baisley Boulevard, Bedell Street, 134th Road, 137th Avenue. The utilities of Rochdale Village 20 buildings are provided by a common power plant on Bedell Street. Rochdale Village has its

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own team of public safety officers that patrol the village in addition to being in the confines of the 113th Police Precinct.

Rochdale Village has a community center centrally located that is intended to serve the intergenerational community of all 20 buildings. Rochdale Village has a senior center and is a naturally occurring retirement community, receiving annual city funding from the Department for the Aging.

Rochdale Village is an enclave of people from the African Diaspora and is the only such NORC in Queens of that nature. Rochdale Village is also part of the Jamaica and Hollis community that the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, TRIE, identified as one of 33 communities having accounted for more than 50 percent of the city's COVID 19 cases.

When I think of Rochdale Village, I think of people like me coming from or

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having ancestors from South Carolina, Georgia, other parts of the south and the Caribbean, formerly of other parts of Queens, and Greater New York. Graduates of HBCUs and CUNY, et cetera, graduates of Jamaica High School, et cetera. My neighbors include employees and retirees of the MTA, NYPD, FDNY, civil servants and so forth; people who speak not only English but Creole, Spanish and various African languages. It is even the home of olympic medalist, Dalilah Muhammad.

Elected officials and politicians seeking votes often make stops at Rochdale Village and participate in our community events.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Can you ask you to start to wrap up, sir?

IVAN MOSSOP: Okay.

New York City Charter Chapter 2A 52C states, district lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and

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association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other.

It is my contention that Rochdale Village by its very name in its 50-year or actually 60-year history is a neighborhood community with established ties of common historical, racial, economic, ethnic and religious interest and association. Any attempt to partition Rochdale Village into more than one city council district, would be against the New York City Charter and leave our community dismembered or drawn and quartered. Respectfully submitted. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

Next is Dan Kaminsky and then Jonathan Esler.

DAN KAMINSKY: First, I want to echo statements from before, just thanking y'all. It is past my bedtime, I'm sure many of the people here so thank you for ensuring everyone gets heard. Thank the

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people who are staying posted.

My name is Dan Kaminsky. I'm the policy manager at Citizens Union and today I'm talking more about the process than about the lines itself.

So we've been running a community education program, where we worked with over a thousand New Yorkers. I think we're really pleased that so many folks have come out. We see this as generally a good thing, even though it means a later bedtime for many. And as the Commission moves to the next stage of the process, Citizens Union makes the following comments and recommendations:

One, explain the reasoning behind line drawing decisions. The draft redistricting plan made some substantial changes yet, the Commission has not provided a meaningful oral or written explanation to justify any new lines. Most notably, the proposed plan kept three whole districts on Staten Island. This decision exceeded the Commission's

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own analysis of district population limits without clarifying these changes to the public.

By using most of the legally allowed population on Staten Island deviation on Staten Island, 4.29 out of the 5 percent, the Commission left the other 48 districts in the city with much less room to accommodate population changes or comments from communities of interest. Under your proposed map, Staten Island averages 165,481 people per district, while the rest of the city averages 173,342 people per district. While this is technically legal, it undermines the principle of one person, one vote, and equal apportionment.

Citizens Union finds the absence of clear public justification for this decision and other decisions to be concerning. The urgency of providing public justification for the lines, has taken on new added significance to this cycle, as this is the first time where

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there's not a need for a preclearance report.

Number two, conduct mapping deliberations in public. The public was not exposed to negotiations the Commission had about drawing the preliminary council lines. There is no reason for discussions over the final lines to be kept out of the public's eye.

As we detailed in a letter submitted to y'all on August 10th with -- which a bunch of cosigners was here as well, we're particularly concerned by recent reports that others have mentioned about possible backroom deals between appointing authorities and their influence over mapping decisions.

While we understand the Commission's need to work in small subcommittees, key mapping issues should be brought for discussion before the Commission as a whole. We urge you to hold mapping deliberations as part of an open public

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meeting.

Open meetings on mapping deliberations are not an uncommon practice for commission-led redistricting process. Actually, the last New York City Redistricting Commission in 2012 held multiple public meetings on maps and included district by district presentations on the reasoning behind every proposed line and the public's concern about each area.

And finally, third, we request that you disclose any meetings Commissioners have with elected officials. All meetings and other conversations with council members, other elected officials or their representatives -- almost done -- related to the district -- redistricting, must be disclosed.

The redistricting process is exposed to politicization. Now that the maps are out, elected officials and others may try to put pressure on Commissioners behind closed doors. To keep the

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mapmaking process transparent,  
Commissioners or staff members who  
discuss maps with individuals who are  
not affiliated with the Commission,  
should file a disclosure form. Thank  
y'all so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
testimony.

JOHN ORTIZ: Hello. My name is John  
Ortiz. I'm a lifelong resident of  
District 25, living in Elmhurst Queens,  
off of Queens Boulevard and currently  
attend high school within Long Island  
City in District 26.

On behalf of my community, the  
Filipino community in Little Manila,  
which is situated in Woodside, District  
26. I oppose the Commission's current  
draft proposal because it splits  
Woodside into four multiple districts  
and puts part of Woodside, including  
Little Manila, which is a community of  
interest, rather than keeping District  
26 whole and puts it into D30, which is

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2 a predominantly white community that  
3 encompasses Glendale, Middle Village and  
4 Maspeth. And as we know, communities of  
5 interest are conjoined together with  
6 communities that do not represent them  
7 politically, racially or even  
8 economically do not -- does not make  
9 sense, right? Because if we were to put  
10 a conjoined District 26 with D 30 and  
11 having that contrast of working class  
12 immigrants of Little Manila, Queens over  
13 to a district that's predominantly more  
14 affluent, predominantly more accessible  
15 when it comes to economic and social  
16 status, will cause disenfranchisement to  
17 Little Manila, Queens.

18 Filipinos that are predominantly  
19 immigrants working in Elmhurst and  
20 Woodside also are important people that  
21 work in nursing homes, in the hospital  
22 nearby, in Elmhurst Hospital.

23 Additionally, a major fallacy in the  
24 grouping of those two districts is the  
25 transportation services not provided.

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2 As we know right now with the MTA lines,  
3 Q39 and Q18, which are situated in D30,  
4 are about to be cut and swapped with  
5 QT80, which will cause disruptions in  
6 the services with 20 minute delays  
7 providing (sic) throughout Maspeth and  
8 also Middle Village. And obviously a  
9 lot of people that are working in  
10 Elmhurst Hospital that reside in  
11 Woodside often rely on the 7 Train to  
12 get to their jobs or to also work in  
13 Manhattan, for example, for labor work.  
14 And if they were to rely on these bus  
15 lines, which are obviously being cut  
16 because of the desert is being --  
17 because the transportation desert is  
18 being proposed in the MTA, when it comes  
19 to D30, it'll be highly inconvenient but  
20 also inequitable for immigrant families  
21 to sustain in their lifestyle over there  
22 after working through the night and  
23 having to rely on those bus lines will  
24 not be sufficient for them to get home  
25 on time and also provide for the

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communities back home.

So therefore, the political, economical interpretation and means of the immigrant community like Woodside, Little Manila, is at risk of erasure with that proposal, it does not represent the communities of interests.

Then what does that say to the residents who stimulate the city's economy encompasses the diversity only to be disenfranchised and fractioned in fragments because of Staten Island being the predecessor and also being the decision to make a whole of other 48 districts that often are being disenfranchised right now.

So I ask the Commission to keep Woodside, Elmhurst whole to the fullest extent and to preserve our various communities of interest, in reference to the Unity Map proposal by the Unity Coalition, and also to prior City Council district maps, in order to make sure that our community of immigrants in

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Woodside are not disenfranchised and are kept whole. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you very much. I'll be right back.

COUNSEL PYUN: Chairman Palmer and then Eric Duncan.

Eric Duncan.

ERIC DUNCAN: Yes, good evening. My name is Eric Duncan. I am a resident of Ravenswood Houses in New York City Housing. I'm a community activist there. I also have been the vice president of the Ravenswood Resident Association, I've been a secretary for the Police Executive Board PS8 Community Council. I just left a position with Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement for two years working as a subcontractor employee for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on Test and Trace and Tree projects.

I'm here to say that the map is unacceptable, no disrespect to you guys. The analogy I can make looking at that

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map is like District 26 was a whole, healthy community of all different types of ethnicities working well together and looking at that map between the dissections and outright amputations, it's now a corpse. It's not functional.

As far as our community leader, Councilmember Julie Won, she was out in the trenches with me and other people from the community in 2020 and 2021, before she was elected, making sure that there was food being brought into the community, thousands of meals.

She was out in the street handing out masks and hand sanitizer before she was elected. Her office is unprecedented. She has an LGBTQ representative, she has an African-American representative, someone who speaks Nepali, Tibetan, Bengali. She has a Caucasian, she has a Mexican, a Colombian. She has someone to represent for every part of her constituency.

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Now you want to amputate  
Queensbridge and Ravenswood Houses  
totally out of her district and force us  
to be represented by someone who does  
not have anything that connects us the  
way that our representative does; and we  
elected her. That's not fair.

I'm not going to speak to the things  
that have already been spoken on about  
the Voting Rights Act. All of that has  
been beaten to death. I just want you  
to take a serious look at what you're  
doing. And I'd like to suggest that the  
next time -- this can be in ten years --  
maybe you can give the people who  
actually live in the boroughs to do the  
redistricting.

And the next time that you have a  
hearing, could you schedule it earlier  
in the day. We had six representatives  
from the Ravenswood Community, that are  
all senior. They had to leave. You  
know that this goes on for seven, eight  
hours. Possibly you could start in the

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middle of the afternoon so that people can actually get the opportunity to speak and you could hear them. Thank you.

COUNSEL PYUN: Rosalba Almazan.  
Vishnu Maha Mahidol (phonetic).  
Vishnu Maha Mahidol.  
Muhammad Ahmed. He already

testified.

Nalima Ahmed.

NALIMA AHMED: It's been a long day.  
Thank you all. I want to start there first.

My script said good afternoon but it's actually good evening now. I do want to say thank you for the opportunity to testify. Thank you for still being here. It's really important to have these conversations and I appreciate all of your time.

My name is Nalima Ahmed and I use she/her pronouns. I'm an immigrant from Guyana who has called Richmond Hill home the majority of my life. I'm also a

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volunteer with the Caribbean Equality Project, a Queens-based community LGBTQ immigrant right based organization.

Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are home to the largest South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in Queens, one of the fastest immigrant populations in New York City. Currently, my neighborhood is unjustly divided into three city council districts, 28, 29 and 32. These district lines have deliberately gerrymandered our political power for decades.

The Commission's proposed map for Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park fracture my community even further into five city council districts, 27, 28, 29, 31, and now 32 -- and 32.

From my understanding of the New York City Council redistricting process, which is very limited, I do want to say, the goal of the Commission is to create a compact district that reflects the growth of the general population from

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the 2020 census, including Asians, which consist of a population increase of 345,000 people in New York City.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, I joined Caribbean Equality Project to do census outreach to count my underrepresented community of interest. We jeopardize our safety and lives to count the underserved and underfunded communities of Little Guyana in Richmond Hill and Little Punjab and South Ozone Park.

After dominating multiple hearings, the Commission's draft maps failed to keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park into a single district. That's unacceptable at this point, especially with all the data that has been collected from the census.

We are more than numbers but this Commission should not ignore many contributions of South Queens. The South Asian and Indo-Caribbean community share similar language diversity,

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migration history, cultural and religious tradition and historical faith-based institutions that deserve to be united and not divided.

The natural boundaries of Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are Woodhaven Boulevard to the west, Jamaica Avenue to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east and the South Conduit Avenue to the south.

You have the power to end gerrymandering in South Queens. And today I'm calling on all of you, even those that are not here still, to stand with us to undo decades of political harm. I hope you will hear our collective voice and not contribute to the growing trend of racial gerrymandering and political oppression. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN WALCOTT: Right on time. Thank you very much.

So I need to have us take a five minute break because our stenographer is

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one person who has been here the entire time and has not had the flexibility to get up to do whatever she needs to do. And so we're going to take a five minute break and we'll be right back here and then reconvene.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm ready to reconvene. It's been about five minutes. Again, it's really, really late. So if one could really be on time as far as their testimony so we can leave a little earlier and anything else can be read into our public testimony, which we do read. So with that being said -- is it Kaytri Sahatri (phonetic).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She just went to the restroom.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She'll be right back.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Okay, just remind me.

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Paul Trust.

Paul Trust.

Danielle Brecker.

Danielle's here?

DANIELLE BRECKER: I'm here.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hi, Danielle. And the way you just went to the microphone gave us all a new round of energy.

DANIELLE BRECKER: I have been here since 5:00 because I voted before I came here.

CHAIR WALCOTT: You did it in such a way we all have a new round.

DANIELLE BRECKER: It's really strange to watch myself on screen. Okay.

Hello. I am Danielle Brecker testifying on behalf of Queens Community Board 2. Queens Community Board 2 is dedicated to making sure the people who live within our boundaries, our neighbors, are represented, have a voice in decisions that impact their lives and have needed resources.

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We call on the New York City Redistricting Commission to hold additional hearings in Queens in September and beyond so everyone who wants to testify -- and tonight is not everyone -- has an opportunity to do so.

Public input should be the priority. The Commission's proposal -- I'm sorry.

Queens Community Board 2 opposes the first map proposal for Council District 26, as it does not comport with the New York City Charter and will have an adverse impact on our community. The Commission's proposal to add a portion of Manhattan and all of Roosevelt Island to Queens-based Council District 26 violates the city districting requirements, as it fails to keep the neighborhoods and communities intact, keep the district compact and creates an oddly shaped crossover district.

The proposed 26 further violates the requirement to keep neighborhoods and communities intact by dividing Woodside

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2 into four council districts. The impact  
3 on CB2 is stark. The proposed map  
4 shifts -- as many people have said --  
5 the proposed map shifts the racial  
6 makeup of District 26 towards majority  
7 white, 29 percent currently to 44  
8 percent. Meaning further  
9 disenfranchisement and deprioritization  
10 of communities of color and immigrants,  
11 and the proposed map inflates the  
12 average income of District 26 and CB2  
13 from \$80,000.00 to \$110,000.00 meaning  
14 the incomes is overstated for the  
15 majority. But it is not about  
16 demographics. It is about  
17 representation and resources.

18 While the proposed map would make  
19 Manhattan East Side Hospital part of 26,  
20 CB2 would still have no hospitals or  
21 places to give birth, as ambulances will  
22 not cross a bridge or go through a  
23 tunnel unless one pays privately.  
24 Healthcare will remain inaccessible and  
25 inequitable for many CB2 residents.

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2           The proposed 26 means small  
3 communities like Blissville and Wynwood  
4 Gardens will even have less  
5 representation and resources. In  
6 Blissville, this impacts the resources  
7 available to unhoused residents and  
8 shelters. With the proposed District  
9 26, CB2 schools will compete for already  
10 decreased funding and longstanding  
11 problems of overcrowding and the need to  
12 build new schools, especially in growing  
13 areas like Hunter's Point and Court  
14 Square would continue to be unmet for  
15 years. The proposed 26 would divert  
16 attention from funding to environmental  
17 issues in CB2, including Newtown Creek  
18 clean up, and access health issues  
19 related to Asthma Alley.

20           The proposed map would increase  
21 public park space in District 26, but  
22 that space would be in Manhattan or on  
23 Roosevelt Island, which is a cause for  
24 concern regarding funding for existing  
25 and new parks in CB2. Thank you.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you.

Was it Kaytri Sahatri (phonetic).  
Was that the individual who -- okay.  
Take your time. Don't run.

And Paul Trust did not respond,  
correct?

Okay.

So after Kaytri, is Nonni Pratt  
(phonetic) here?

Umkar Budda Madgar (phonetic).

Phoenix Radgar (phonetic), as well  
as Hussain Budda Madgar (phonetic).

Why don't you go ahead?

KAYTRI SAHATRI: Thank you. Sorry  
to keep you waiting.

CHAIR WALCOTT: No, no. Don't  
apologize, please.

KAYTRI SAHATRI: Good evening, my  
name is Kaytri Sahatri and I'm here  
tonight as a representative of the  
Indo-Caribbean Alliance Inc., otherwise  
known as ICA, the first nonprofit  
organization dedicated to the  
empowerment of Indo-Caribbeans in the

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United States.

I am 51-years old and I live in Richmond Hill, Queens. I have been living here for more than 30 years with my elderly parents who migrated from Guyana in 1985. After my marriage in 1999, I also brought my Indian-born husband, who is here with me today, to live here in Richmond Hill with is.

I also have three siblings who live in Queens with their families. I work at a law firm at downtown Manhattan and commute daily on the A Train from Lefferts Boulevard to Broadway-Nassau and back.

Being a resident of Richmond Hill is a great source of pride for me and my family. Which is why I am against the Commission's plan to split Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park into several districts.

The Indo-Caribbean community is among the five largest immigrant populations in the city and the second

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largest in Queens. We have been contributing to the city in areas of healthcare, education, law enforcement, politics and business. And being one of the hardest hit by COVID 19 pandemic, I think we deserve an equal opportunity for representation at the table of power.

You have heard from many leaders and residents today all conveying how important it is to keep communities together. Representation is important. At ICA we see families who come through our doors asking for support, ranging from tutoring and mentoring for their children, social services assistance, as well as questions around immigration and voting.

In addition to this, whenever a natural disaster strikes or manmade disaster, such as COVID 19, fires that we recently had on 125th Street on Liberty Avenue and other disasters in our community, people come to us for

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support. We have a responsibility in our community to meet the needs of the thousands that are in our community.

It is important for us to have the representation and that seed at the able that will enable us to continue to provide that support from our community.

A healthy community has a strong identity. It is so important for communities to maintain their identities and be supported in every way. This past Saturday I was fortunate to lead a group of Indo-Caribbean families on a tour of Liberty Avenue in Richmond Hill. I watched the pride and joy on the faces of the young children as I pointed out landmarks that the contributions of members of our community; such as Wall Street and Little Guyana.

This in itself is the result and reward for keeping our districts and communities intact. These young people will grow up with a strong sense of identity and purpose. Please don't take

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that away from them. Keep all of South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill together. Thank you.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you.

Is it Wotell Rock (phonetic)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

(Unintelligible).

Jayden Amir.

Purna Haja Madgar (phonetic).

Dhondup Lockpa (phonetic).

Whojohnny Lee (phonetic).

WHOJOHNNY LEE: Good evening, everybody. My name is Lee and I'm 26-years old. I spend most of my adult life in Elmhurst and Jackson Heights near the hospital and also Flushing.

As a Chinese-American immigrant, I recognize the Commission's effort in keeping the Asian-American community whole in District 25. However, I also fully support the Unity Map, not just for Elmhurst but also for all other neighboring districts which keeps the Asian-American interests at heart and

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unites all communities that are consisted of people of color, since often times we do share the very same interest and concerns.

People often say Queens is the most diverse borough, but I would like to add that Elmhurst and Jackson Heights is at the heart of Queens and is undoubtedly the most diverse neighborhood.

The majority of Elmhurst is in Congressional District 6, State Senate District 12 and Assembly District 39. Historically, we tend to elect minority and queer local representatives to advocate on our behalf.

Last year, we saw a record breaking voter turnout the elect the first ever Asian -- American city council member to our district. To be more specific with the draft map, I'm seeing that in my district a few blocks below Roosevelt were chopped off and a huge chunk of Woodside above Broadway, which should belong to District 26 were somehow added

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in return.

From my understanding, Woodside and Sunnyside have always been combined in terms of district lines due to their location and the communities' shared interest. The Unity Map would address this issue perfectly, as it keeps the entirety of Woodside and Sunnyside in District 26 and also Elmhurst and Jackson Heights in 25, without any overlapping and misrepresentation of the communities involved.

Also as a Chinese-American immigrant, I'm so proud to say that I'm a community organizer based in Flushing, which is also why I'm advocating for the Unity Map for Flushing and Bayside, which address the misrepresentation issue of our community.

The Commission's draft map lower the northern boundary of District 20 from 23rd Avenue to 29th Avenue. We ask that Commission's map be modified to consider the growing Asian-American community in

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Mitchell-Linden and move the northern boundary to 22nd Avenue, as the Unity Map does.

More importantly, I would also like the Commission to reconsider the Unity Map specifically near Murray Hill, which is the vibrant Korean-American neighborhood that centers on Northern Boulevard and is currently divided by the Commission's draft map as well as in existing lines.

The Unity Map addressed this issue perfectly by bringing in the entirety of Murray Hill back to District 20 where it should belong, a district that is predominantly consisted of Chinese and Korean Americans and historically elects Asian-Americans as our local representatives. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony. Now we're going to go virtual and then we'll come back in -- person.

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Is it Murray Galinine (phonetic)?

MURRAY GALININE: Galinine. Thank  
you.

Well, first of all, it's late and  
I'm grateful that you all have stayed  
here. Thank you, Chairman Walcott and  
the Commission. I really appreciate it.

My name is Murray Galinine. I am  
chairperson of the Queens Community  
Board 2. Before I start, I just want to  
say how listening to the really  
heartfelt, thoughtful and passionate  
testimony from my neighbors here in  
Queens, really humbles me and makes me  
so proud to be a resident of Queens. It  
really shows how important it is to come  
together to participate in democracy and  
let our voices be heard.

I'm testifying tonight to make sure  
that our community has proper  
representation, that we prevent  
disenfranchisement and that we ensure  
that marginalized communities are not  
divided and diluted. This is why we

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strongly oppose the map, this first map proposal for District 26.

The draft district does not align with the New York City Charter and it will have adverse effects on our community and our council district.

The district is not compact, as you've heard over and over again from different folks' testimony. It does not limit crossover districts. In fact, it spreads over three different land masses but it is three different landmasses. I know it's really only two boroughs technically, but it is three different landmasses that are all distinct.

The proposed district actually received a score of 27.4 out of 100 for compactness by The CUNY Center for Urban Research, which you can learn more about that at [redistricting.org](https://redistricting.org). As you've heard before, it's not keeping the community intact and when we look at the demographics, as we've heard before, right now, we have a very even split

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among Asian, Hispanic and white non-Hispanic, all around 30 percent. The new district would be 44 percent white non-Hispanic and will drop all of the other demographic ethnicities. And if we cut out Woodside and we split it into multiple districts, it's just going to lead to more disenfranchisement.

CB2, as you've heard before, has a dearth of public open green spaces and no hospital birthing center or women's medical facility. These are all things we have been working hard to improve. However, if we add in Manhattan and Roosevelt Island, the district suddenly looks like we have a glut of resources and infrastructure and we won't actually be getting any improvements in the district. And that can hurt our ability to get the resources we need.

What we haven't talked about much is an impact on the actual council district. CB2, of course, as a city agency is a nonpartisan agency, but we

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2 must address the impact of the proposed  
3 District 26 would have on CB2 Queens.

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5 The result of this map would mean  
6 diminished representation. Why?

6

7 Because the councilmember, whoever that  
8 would be, would be saddled with multiple  
9 community boards and three different

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10 landmasses, meaning less representation,  
11 attention, resources and funding for all

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12 the districts. This representative

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13 would also be responsible for multiple

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14 land use and re-zonings, meaning that

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15 the member would have to spend

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16 significant time and have significant

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17 influence on development across two

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18 boroughs and multiple communities and

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19 would likely need multiple district

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20 offices, perhaps three; Queens,

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21 Roosevelt Island and Manhattan, which

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22 would mean more money spent on rent

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23 rather than on constituent services.

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24 Finally, I call the Commission to

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25 hold additional hearings. We've seen

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this is really, really, a tremendous

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outpouring of participation here  
tonight. We know it's exhausting for  
everyone, but people in Queens want to  
be able to testify and we're grateful  
for you staying so late. But this is a  
time of where when people are on  
vacation and many are visiting family in  
faraway places.

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As you've heard, this is a borough  
that is extremely diverse with  
immigrants from all over the world. And  
while school is out, people are  
vacationing and visiting family far  
away. So the community must have a  
voice in this process and we must not  
let logistics impede their opportunity  
to participate.

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Our full statement will contain more  
and will be submitted. Thank you for  
your time and attention.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
your testimony.

24

Okay. Now we're back here.

25

Five Borough Man.

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FIVE BOROUGH MAN: To the Chair and Executive Director who prepares for Shaft and Superfly, not to mention Geoffrey Cambridge and (unintelligible). Again, I told you these public hearings shouldn't start before 6 p.m. and you didn't listen.

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There's an old saying that goes, your hard head will give you a soft behind. You didn't tell me before time I could preregister, so I was confused when the female posted that to ask me if I preregistered. You didn't tell me I could preregister as far as I know. So as a result, I signed the sheet but didn't know I had to wait over six hours before I could finally testify, which I find very disturbing given the fact that I arrived here at 3:59 p.m., doors didn't open until 5:15 p.m. and it's now after 11. It's almost midnight and now I'm finally testifying.

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I don't find that amusing and I sure as hell don't appreciate it. I

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sincerely hope you don't do that in the future. In fact, any public hearings you're holding, I'd like to preregister. This way hopefully, I don't have to wait several hours before you finally call my name. It feels like you didn't even want to acknowledge me, which I didn't appreciate.

As I said before, if you want to be successful, if you want to redraw lines successfully, you should go by the bus corridors. That's the best way to redraw these maps. Go by the bus corridors.

Many bus corridors have many bus corridors in all five boroughs. If you go by the bus, the bus corridors could be the boundaries. This way we'll know who's representing us under the city council, under the state assembly, under the federal Congress. But apparently, you didn't listen because from what I was told, you want to separate Sunnyside and Woodside, you want to separate Ozone

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Park and Richmond Hill. So I guess your favorite song is, you got to keep them separated.

As I said before, you're not supposed to break up the communities. This is a break up to make up corporate stylistics. I'm sure you remember that song, (unintelligible) you're old enough. You should remember it.

Okay. This is round two, and I still haven't seen any improvements from round one. The Chair and Executive Director aren't listening. They're not sharing our concerns. I don't know why they bother holding public hearings to begin with. It's like they are not holding it for our interest, they are holding it for their interest.

Well, as you can see, the auditorium is empty. Is this the Districting Commission or is it MTA, which stands for Money Thrown Away.

You're just going to have to keep on trying until you get it right, okay.

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And by the way, speaking to you two gentlemen is like speaking to my divorced -- parent. You don't listen, they don't listen. So as I said, your hard head will give you a soft behind.

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Food for thought.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

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Is it Howard Binbar?

11

Anu Diwar (phonetic).

12

Catello Thomas (phonetic).

13

Joyce Short.

14

Pensly Cantos (phonetic).

15

Marciallo Santos (phonetic).

16

Phil Wong.

17

Craig Carciture (phonetic).

18

Annel Shahigh.

19

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20

(Unintelligible).

21

CHAIR WALCOTT: Spell that again.

22

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

23

(Unintelligible).

24

CHAIR WALCOTT: I said Phil Wong --

25

that was Phil Wong, maybe.

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Annel Shahigh.

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Jane Pratt.

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Gerald Nunez.

5

Benjamin Kim.

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Benjamin Kim?

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Don't run, don't run, don't run,

8

please.

9

BENJAMIN KIM: Hello, hello. Thank

10

you. Wow. I want to thank you for your

11

time and hosting us so late into the

12

night.

13

My name is Benjamin Kim and I'm the

14

project coordinator for Woodside on the

15

Move, a local community nonprofit that

16

serves the community of Woodside and the

17

greater western Queens area. We are a

18

member of the APA Voice Redistricting

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Task Force, as many of our previous

20

members have spoke about.

21

Aside from the fact that I work in

22

Woodside, I'm also a resident of

23

Woodside. I've been living in Woodside

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for about six years now. My family

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settled in western Queens from Korea and

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we have long ties in the community here,  
in Sunnyside and Woodside.

The preliminary map proposal by the  
Districting Commission is very  
concerning as it splits Woodside into  
four separate city council districts,  
22, 25, 26 and 30. It puts the bulk of  
Woodside into City Council District 30,  
dividing the communities of interest  
within the current city council lines,  
disregarding the city charter and the  
Federal Voting Rights Act.

Woodside on the Move's main goals as  
a community based organization are to  
serve the Woodside community, and by  
splitting up these neighborhoods, it  
prevents our organization from doing our  
work to the fullest potential.

Indeed we were shocked that the  
preliminary map proposal had none of our  
members, or Woodside residents testify  
at the discretionary hearing to be  
placed in City Council District 30. Too  
often, APA communities are divided as an

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afterthought to mean a district's one person, one vote requirement. However, we are more than dispensable numbers. We are a community.

The Unity Map proposal by the APA Voice Coalition keeps the majority of Woodside whole and within City Council District 30. We support this map, this Unity Map proposal because keeping Woodside whole means that us, as a community organization, we can continue to provide vital services and advocacy efforts our community members rely on.

Speaking of City Council District 21 -- 26, rather, in 2021, we elected our very first ever female and immigrant representative and Councilmember, Julie Won. The district that elected Julie Won had an Asian plurality and was a well-proportioned district.

By redistricting parts of Manhattan and Roosevelt Island into City Council District 20 and the bulk of Woodside into City Council District 30, it will

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create two white plurality districts at the expense of a performing minority district.

The communities that we do serve, such as members of the Latin X community, who came here by the busload, reside in both neighborhoods of Sunnyside and Woodside, which under the Commission's proposal, would be split from each other.

Your most recent map proposal also has our office located in redistricted council District 30 separate from our -- most of our constituents and our clients from the greater Woodside area. When residents of Woodside are facing unlawful eviction and need housing assistance, or when working parents need a safe and welcoming local after school program to look after their children, they come to Woodside on the Move. But with these new map proposals, that brings that all into question.

I want to thank you for your time

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and giving us the opportunity to  
testify. Thank you so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your  
testimony.

Samten Noran.

Pema Choden (phonetic).

Following you, Pompano Parkrello  
(phonetic). And then Emma Gartan.

PEMA CHODEN: Respected Commission  
Board Members, and good evening to all  
my. Name is Pema Choden and I was born  
and raised in Tibetan refugee camp in  
India. I migrate to the United States  
over two decades ago and I'm proud to be  
a Queens resident, a New Yorker and I'm  
fortunate to be a Tibetan-American.

For over three decades, we the  
Tibetan refugees from Tibet, India,  
Nepal and Bhutan migrate to U.S. and  
scatter it (sic) on different states.

New York Tri-state is the highest  
Tibetan population living here comparing  
other state. The majority of Tibetan  
lives around the Astoria, Sunnyside,

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2 Long Island City and Woodside. Today  
3 there are over 15,000 Tibetan in this  
4 neighborhood. We, the Tibetan  
5 community, has been unified part of  
6 council District 26. Our Tibetan  
7 community center is the largest  
8 nonprofit organization represent in the  
9 U.S. Our community center is also  
10 currently in the district in Woodside.  
11 Even our Queens library branch in  
12 Woodside has Tibetan language books.  
13 The library would be placed in another  
14 district -- it's a (sic) sad for me and  
15 for the Tibetan community.

16 At our community center, we learn to  
17 preserve our identity, our language,  
18 art, cultural. For me, the community  
19 center is heart and soul for a  
20 Tibetan-American in New York. It would  
21 disrupt community service and  
22 (unintelligible) the resource. What we  
23 got, we got leadership from Council  
24 District 26.

25 For this first time, even in New

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York history, we have a council office that provide resource and translation in our Tibetan language. This is very, very -- how grateful this America is to us. By presenting our identity and political power relies on our unity to have fair and effective representative (sic) by one council member.

In conclusion, I strongly urge and request to all the Commissions to make sure Woodside stay together with Long Island City, Sunnyside, Western Astoria. Please protect against fracturing our community and dividing us into multiple council district. I support to the Unity Map. Thank you for all (sic).

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

Is it Ampano Arboleda? No?

Is it Emma Artan?

NGA -- all right.

Following -- is Christina Ambrose here?

Hello. Good evening. My name is

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2 Nowang and I'm the vice president of  
3 Tibetan Community of New York and New  
4 Jersey and I'm here with one of our  
5 board members. And we have recently  
6 elected, overwhelmingly by the Tibetan  
7 Community of New York and New Jersey,  
8 and we represent Tibetan nonprofit  
9 organizations of three provinces of  
10 Tibet; Student for Free Tibet, Tibetan  
11 Nurses Association, Tibetan Women's  
12 Association and many other nonprofit  
13 organizations under the Tibetan  
14 community of New York and New Jersey.

15 With the passage of Immigration Act  
16 of 1990, that welcomed migrants to the  
17 United States in early '90s and  
18 resettled around in Astoria, Woodside,  
19 Sunnyside, Long Island (sic), and mostly  
20 in Queens Borough.

21 Tibetan community in New York  
22 comprises of (unintelligible) of  
23 personal backgrounds. Tibetans from  
24 Tibet, asylum seekers, refugees from  
25 India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibetan-Americans.

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Tibetans want Tibetans. As displaced people of Tibet for over 63 years, we've made this home for over thirty years and we're here as a result of displacement due to the threat of genocide of our culture and population.

Please do not add to the diminishing of our voice and our community by dividing us into multiple council districts. For over thirty years, Tibetan community has been a unified part of Council District 26. We ask that you allow us to stay together in the district.

Tibetan Community Center of New York and New Jersey is the largest Tibetan nonprofit organization. We represent Tibetans all over the western world and we are one of the largest Tibetan communities in the United States. It's very vibrant, it's very vigor, and we always have something on the weekends so that we can preserve our culture, identity, religion and language et

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cetera.

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So I mean it's been too late so I  
don't want to go much. My final request  
is I strongly recommend making sure that  
Woodside stays together with Long Island  
City, Sunnyside, Western Astoria as it  
has been for the last thirty years.  
Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

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CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for  
your testimony.

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Is it Christina Ambrose?

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Maria Romaine.

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Maria Rosario.

15

Jessica Cardena.

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Ivan Conteras.

17

Renee Taylor.

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Shatta Perez.

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Richard David.

20

Okay. Following you -- is Deepak  
(phonetic) here?

21

22

And following Richard David is John  
Cho.

23

24

Is John Cho here?

25

Okay. And then -- is it Serrani

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Islam?

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So, Mr. David.

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RICHARD DAVID: Okay. Good night,

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Commissioner Walcott and other

6

commissioners here tonight. My name is

7

Richard David. I'm a district leader in

8

Assembly District 31 in Southeast

9

Queens. I'm also a board member of the

10

Indo-Caribbean Alliance, who you heard

11

from earlier tonight.

12

I'm here to recommend improvements

13

to the proposed map for Richmond Hill

14

and South Ozone Park. I moved to the

15

United States from Guyana and have lived

16

in Southeast Queens for 27 years. This

17

is where I landed and continue to live

18

with my mom, my brothers and their kids.

19

This is actually really common to live

20

with extended family members in this

21

part of Queens.

22

I was surprised to see that in this

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part of Queens and in New York City,

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there are actually more Guyanese than

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even the country of Guyana. And

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actually, we are the second largest foreign-born population in Queens after the Chinese community. This is nothing new. It's actually been like this for decades.

Trinidadians who also live in our neighborhood are in the top ten foreign-born population groups as well, and that's nothing new. And so we use the term Indo-Caribbean to represent the ethnic communities of the Southern Caribbean that we all share a common culture, language and heritage to bring us together and mobilize and advocate for our common interest here in New York.

One thing that has not changed though, are the political -- the city council lines representing this area, and that's reflected in the city council, where we have never been able to elect a city councilmember from any of these communities, although they are such large populations here in New York

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2 city. And so, in this geographic area,  
3 you also have no political offices at  
4 the city council level. So we lack  
5 basic access to senior services,  
6 education resources, sanitation, the  
7 main corridor in our neighborhood  
8 doesn't even have garbage cans, and  
9 immigration resources. So this  
10 Commission has this important task to  
11 correct decades of undoing. So it's not  
12 one night of staying here late to fix  
13 forty years of being overlooked.

14 The current map you've proposed for  
15 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, it  
16 goes far but it doesn't go far enough.  
17 It must include Smokey Park, which is  
18 where we have all of our outdoor  
19 festivals; every single one of them.  
20 It's along 125th Street and Atlantic  
21 Avenue.

22 There are also about six blocks that  
23 is cut out of South Ozone Park and put  
24 into the Rockaways. There's no way for  
25 those residents to get representation in

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the Rockaways if they live in South Ozone Park. And so I'm requesting that this Commission use the boundaries of Jamaica Avenue to the north, the Conduit Expressway to the south, Woodhaven Boulevard to the west, and the Van Wyck Expressway to the east.

These are the same lines we asked for at the federal and state levels and we're asking here, tonight, to have these lines in the city council.

Thank you all for being here and for giving us the opportunity to testify before you. I appreciate it.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony, sir.

I just want to double check.

Deepok.

John Cho.

Serrani Islam.

Iris Chang.

I think Tenzin was earlier and is it Elvis Davis Johnson?

Roger Rodriguez.

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Then Nelly Rodriguez.

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William Craigler.

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Andre Dorth.

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Richard Khuzami.

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Loretta Foreman.

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William Thomas.

8

William Thomas? Okay.

9

And then following William Thomas --

10

is Brandon Lee Johnson here?

11

Yvonne Hogue.

12

Jennifer Robinson.

13

Did I hear a response to Jennifer

14

Robinson?

15

That was a yawn. You're the first

16

one I've heard yawn all night.

17

Jennifer Robinson.

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George Lugo.

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Myrna Swaby.

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Christina Chayes.

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Okay.

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WILLIAM THOMAS: Hi, everyone. My

23

name is Will Thomas. I'm a new resident

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of Long Island City. I'm the executive

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director of Open New York. We're an

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independent grassroots pro-housing organization.

We believe that New York is suffering an immense housing shortage largely due to exclusionary land use and zoning policies.

I'll try to keep this very brief, given how late we are. The one thing we would like to say is our advocacy and land use has given us some insight into the redistricting process, which we would like to share. The first thing that I want to emphasize is just the Staten Island point that everyone else has made tonight. You know, they're substantially lower in residents than the ideal district size, it's very unfair.

We think that the only point we would like to add there is that Staten Island's political representatives have actively worked with the Bloomberg Administration to impose exclusionary zoning and growth controls. They should

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face the consequences of those decisions, rather than being gifted extra representation for simply being a separate borough or controlling the minority party in the city council; so we think that those districts should be extended out to Brooklyn.

But the other thing that we would suggest, which I don't know has been mentioned tonight, is redrawing maps with an eye to expected residential change over time. As map drawers are no doubt aware, population growth has not been equally distributed across the city. According to the Citizens Budget Commission, over the last decade, over half of the housing built in New York City has been concentrated in just ten neighborhoods, and fully, one third has been concentrated in just five neighborhoods. So the far west side of Manhattan, downtown Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Long Island City and Astoria.

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One insight we have from our housing advocacy, population growth is not an independent variable. It's dependant on housing construction. And because only certain areas of the city are zoned to allow substantially more housing construction, we know that growth will likely be concentrated in those areas.

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So we know districts aren't going to be likely to have exactly equivalent populations. But where they have to differ, we would ask map drawers to err on the side of historical data. You know, if neighborhoods are -- have seen little growth or grown substantially, they're likely to continue on that path without serious policy interventions, which means that maps drawn without that in mind, can very quickly result in unequal representation in just a few years.

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To give a Queens centric example, District 26 covers Long Island City.

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It's fastest growing neighborhood in the

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2 United States and yet, it's already over  
3 its ideal population by 1100 residents.  
4 This growth is likely to continue, so  
5 should be an area where map makers feel  
6 safe to shoot under.

7

8 There are a few thousand homes that  
9 are already in residential developments  
10 under construction right now. It makes  
11 sense to start with the neighborhood --  
12 it makes little sense to start with the  
13 neighborhood already in equitable  
14 representation.

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15 We'll include more written  
16 testimony, but thank you for hearing us  
17 today.

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18 CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you as  
19 well.

18

19

20 Is its Toshi (phonetic).

20

21 Tara Herbert.

21

22 KJGRD, first name. I can't read the  
23 last name.

22

23

24 Next one is Jason Gulupa (phonetic).

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25 Arianne Melliwanog (phonetic).

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Arianne?

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ARIANNE AZARIA: Yes.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Hi.

And then following Arianne, is Farrah, and then Evelyn Mya Fella (phonetic). And Gloria Espinoza.

And then Hassan O.

ARIANNE MELLIWANOG: Hello, everyone. Thank you to the New York Districting Commission for hearing us today. My name is Arianna Melliwanog and I'm testifying on behalf of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations, a nationwide organization dedicated towards the promotion of civic engagement in the Filipino-American community, and also part of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force, which aims to protect APA communities of interest.

We appreciate the work and efforts that you've shared on behalf of the district map thus far, which we recognize is no small feat. This is my third hearing and I stand again here

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today on behalf of my Asian-America community, specifically the Filipino community that resides in Woodside and Elmhurst.

I stand here in opposition of the Commission's draft map, specifically as it unjustifiably splits Woodside into four districts, 22, 25, 26, and 30, and separates parts of Woodside, including the heart of Little Manila in District 30, rather than remaining whole in District 26.

I've previously shared about the impactful connection that Woodside and Elmhurst shares with the Filipino community, the home that Woodside and Elmhurst has provided ever since our healthcare workers emigrated to America in the 1970's, the overrepresentation of Filipinos due to the impact of COVID 19 and some of the achievements, including the welcoming mural that greets everyone into our Little Manila neighborhood.

Again, I want to reiterate

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2 highlights and insights about my  
3 community. The Filipino population is  
4 the fourth largest AAPI population in  
5 both New York City and New York State.  
6 According to 2020 census data shared by  
7 our partners at the Asian-American  
8 Federation, the Filipino population  
9 increased by 15 percent in New York City  
10 between 2010 and 2020. Nearly half of  
11 them reside in Queens and at least 30  
12 percent of those reside in Elmhurst and  
13 Woodside.

14 In Woodside and Elmhurst lives the  
15 highest concentration of Filipino small  
16 businesses of New York State, including  
17 restaurants, remittance centers,  
18 bodegas, and feed centers that serve its  
19 community.

20 Splitting Woodside continues to  
21 fracture our immigrant community's voice  
22 and voting power, impacting our ability  
23 to fund for much needed services for our  
24 community and cultural centers and also  
25 impacts our ability to address anti-hate

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crimes.

This evening, I advocate for the Filipino-American community and the larger APA community. I strongly urge and advocate for the Unity Map, which keeps Little Manila whole, including keeping Woodside whole in District 26, and continuing to keep Elmhurst whole in District 25.

It is important that our immigrant families that share cultural experiences, our restaurants, our grocery stores that cater to our communities, are not fractured and instead are visible, heard and addressed.

Thank you for your time and consideration tonight.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you for your testimony.

HASSAN OCHUNGA: Good morning to all Redistricting Commissioners. My name is Hassan Ochunga (phonetic) and I'm speaking as a Tibetan to oppose the

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proposed map by the Redistricting Commission.

We have our Tibetan community center in Woodside and a lot of Tibetan community lives in Sunnyside and Woodside areas. The main reason why people choose to live nearby and buy houses there is because most of the Tibetans, they send their children to Tibetan language weekend classes, which happens in the Tibetan community center; so that's the main reason.

There's a little bit dense population of Tibetan in Sunnyside and Woodside areas. The proposed redistricting -- the redistricting proposed -- redistricting weakens the already marginalized community and I hope our voice will be heard and the district will not be divided as proposed. Thank you so much.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you for your testimony.

And let me take this opportunity to

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thank all the audience members who are still here.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

(Unintelligible).

CHAIR WALCOTT: I'm sorry that we -- you have to do -- so what is your name so I --

(Cross talk.)

Because I thought I called it earlier, but maybe not.

I remember seeing Zoila before. So yes, come on. Please.

Did I miss someone else?

ZOILA ALONZO: I want to start by saying thank you, again, for the opportunity and the Commission being here this evening and allowing us to give our testimony.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Please move closer to the microphone.

Thanks.

ZOILA ALONZO: And my name is Zoila Alonzo. I'm born in Elmhurst Hospital, a lifelong resident of Northeast Queens,

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my City Council District 21. I, myself, again, am Zoila Alonzo. I'm here with the Queens Latinos Presente.

The framers of the Constitution of the United States chose population to be the basis for sharing political power. The results of every ten years we conduct a census. The results of this census help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding, including grants and support to states, counties and communities are spent every year for the next decade. It helps communities get their fair share for schools, hospitals, roads, public works and representation.

Queens Latinos Presente is a grassroots coalition of Latinos in Queens who are concerned about the lack of representation of Latinos at all levels of city government. We also have witnessed the past failures of this Commission as it relates to redistricting in Queens County to ensure

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Latino opportunity districts, as we only have one for the last almost thirty years.

The City of New York empanelled a Commission to ensure council districts continue to reflect population and demographic changes. The borough of Queens is the most diverse place on the planet and the Latino community is the largest minority group in our borough -- have been, are.

This has been the case for over thirty years but our representation in the city council does not reflect that. Just this year, New York State demonstrated it's own inclination to violate constitutional principles and as a result, have come under the State Supreme Court Appointed Special Master.

We urge the City of New York not to make the same mistakes. We propose three majority Latino districts in Queens County as representative of the population. The first is City Council

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21. This district is a majority Latino district and has been represented by Latinos since 2002. It covers East Elmhurst, Corona, Jackson Heights and Elmhurst.

Since 2002, no other majority Latino district in Queens has been created by the Commission. Extremely concerning. The second district could adjourn the 21st council district with a more equitable, reconfiguring 25th council district, which could take into account the large Latino population in Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Woodside, East Elmhurst and parts of Corona.

We also propose a creation of a third majority Latino district that respectfully takes into account the large Latino population of Woodhaven, Ridgewood, Ozone Park, South Ozone Park, Jamaica and Richmond Hill.

Do not ignore us. We are here. We've been here and we will continue to be here.

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2           Next week, to aid the process, our  
3           group will be submitting Queens County  
4           District Maps for your consideration and  
5           to ensure that such proposed maps are  
6           part of the public record. Thank you  
7           for your time.

8

          CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you. And my  
9           apologies for missing your name.

10

          UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We saw  
11           someone who have a language barrier, who  
12           really until now, you know, did not  
13           register or did not (unintelligible) but  
14           they were here concerning that they want  
15           to (unintelligible) Sunnyside and  
16           Woodside together in the interest of the  
17           community.

18

          CHAIR WALCOTT: Thank you. And what  
19           you can have them do is have them submit  
20           public testimony and we can take it from  
21           there as well. Okay. Thank you.

22

          Did I miss one other person? We  
23           need to really -- the lights are going  
24           off in the theater, so.

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          MR. SPEAKER: Good evening,

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everyone. My name is (unintelligible) from Nepali community. I belong to (unintelligible) Association USA and I live in Woodside region of the city council District 26.

Proposed new map has divided Woodside into four different city council districts. Our Nepali community will be separated from each other very, very badly as well, which is extremely against our community's interest and values. It also (unintelligible) and mandatory protection law.

For the first time ever, we have council office who's serving our community in Nepali language, which has its first Nepali intern and it is a huge victory for us.

But new map will ruin all our excitements. So I strongly recommend making sure Woodside stays together with Sunnyside, Long Island City and Western Astoria, as it has been the last thirty years in the current District 26 lines.

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Thank you so much. Thank you so much everyone.

CHAIR WALCOTT: And thank you so much again for your testimony.

What I would like it do is, again, thank the Museum of Moving Image and also the council member who was a very strong advocate, which allowed us to be here at this late night or early in the morning. And also our commissioners and other hardworking staff will be in the Bronx tomorrow -- really be in the Bronx today and then Staten Island on Thursday and then, Brooklyn on Sunday and then Harlem, Manhattan on Monday.

So thank you all, get home safely and have a good night.

(Time noted: 12:20 A.M., August 17, 2022.)

