



**Make the Road New York Testimony  
New York City Districting Commission  
August 16, 2022**

My name is Theo Oshiro and I am the Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York, the largest grassroots organization of immigrants and working-class people of color in New York. In New York City, we operate community centers in Jackson Heights, Queens; Bushwick, Brooklyn; and Port Richmond. Our 25,000 members build the power of our communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. I submit this testimony to share the organization’s perspective on redistricting.

Increasing civic engagement is a critical part of our work. We conduct outreach continuously to ensure community members’ voices are heard. In the 2020 census, we led in-person, phone, and digital outreach that reached hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our members participated in that process to make certain that our communities receive both adequate resources *and representation*. Now, to achieve such representation, we need a redistricting process that is transparent, fair, and reflects the geographic realities and growing numbers of our communities.

We urge this body to ensure that people of color are represented in the process by:

1. Respecting one person, one vote;
2. Refraining from abusive line-drawing, especially “cracking” and “packing”;
3. Respecting political subdivisions and communities of interest, especially for long-underrepresented immigrant, Black, and brown communities;
4. Ensuring compactness and contiguity; and
5. Prioritizing public participation and transparency.

We submit this comment in response to the commission’s draft proposals.

First, immigrant communities and communities of color across Queens should remain together where possible. For example, given its high numbers of immigrant populations, we believe that the core of Woodside should be kept within a district that is made up of majority immigrants and people of color.

Second, we believe that District 26 should remain an all-Queens district given the substantial population growth in Queens and the differences between the current district and the proposed areas of Manhattan.

Third, while it is not a Queens-specific issue, we wish to comment on the Commission’s proposal to keep three districts wholly in Staten Island, with substantially lower population than

<b>BROOKLYN</b> 301 GROVE STREET BROOKLYN, NY 11237 718 418 7690	<b>QUEENS</b> 92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372 718 565 8500	<b>STATEN ISLAND</b> 161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302 718 727 1222	<b>LONG ISLAND</b> 1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE BRENTWOOD, NY 11717 631 231 2220	<b>WESTCHESTER</b> 46 WALLER AVENUE WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605 914 948 8466
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districts in other parts of New York City. While we have thousands of members in Staten Island and believe it important that they be well represented, we do not think it makes sense for Staten Island districts to have smaller populations than other parts of New York City—particularly when it comes at the expense of Latino and immigrant populations elsewhere in the City (such as Sunset Park). We urge the Commission to reconsider its decision in this regard.

We urge you to take seriously the input of community members and organizations--especially those in historically underrepresented communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at [theo.oshiro@maketheroadny.org](mailto:theo.oshiro@maketheroadny.org) if you have any questions.