



Council Member Amanda Farías Public Testimony for NYC Redistricting Commission

I am Council Member Amanda Farías, representing the 18th District in the New York City Council. I will be submitting additional testimony in the coming weeks to support the current neighborhoods and communities of Council District 18, but tonight I did want to address the first draft maps.

Council District 18 loses a large portion of the Soundview community that is directly reflective of the surrounding areas, while it takes on an area that encompasses York Studios, which can be an opportunity and economic driver for residents. This area also brings larger buildings that are private co-ops.

The new drafted district lines also move toward Council District 18 encompassing a new community - Westchester Square. This would increase our BID footprint, and homeowner footprint. This also feels like a natural fit for adjacent communities like Parkchester, Castle Hill and Zerega to have Westchester Square within their lines.

The two neighborhoods that are newly included in Council District 18 lines are similar if not alike the current neighborhoods that I represent. The Soundview/Bronx River portion that is currently drafted to be removed does bring me caution, as residents here historically are accustomed to being within Council District 18. Though, many of us are new members and maybe that transition won't be so difficult for folks.

I do want to reaffirm that the newly drafted district lines for Council District 18 lines continue to keep Parkchester whole, and the Clason Point/Harding Park Communities whole. From the Parkchester community to the residents of Clason Point, every constituent in the proposed lines for Council District 18 are connected by culture and politics.

It is crucial we do not fragment communities who have already had a long history of underrepresentation and underfunding. District 18 is a Black and Brown community, but in recent years there has been a large increase in Asian immigrants in Parkchester, reflected in the

2020 census data. Our Black and Latinx neighbors have been able to build generational wealth, and opportunity by building a life in Parkchester and The Bengali/Bangladeshi community has created a cultural hub on Starling Ave, directly connected to the Parkchester borders. Parkchester is the largest privately owned affordable housing property in the country—with more than 40,000 inhabitants in the Parkchester complex. It is critical we keep the entire complex together as residents share similar demographics and quality of life issues.

Clason Point, Harding Park, and Soundview are waterfront communities and in recent years have seen increased resiliency efforts and new transit infrastructure, including a new ferry landing, and will continue to need additional support when it comes to protecting our coastline. These communities have a long history of interconnectivity that has afforded the larger Latinx and Black community members the opportunity to build generational wealth. It is because of this history that these communities deserve to be kept together under the same representation.

I am proud to not only represent such a community-centric district, but to also be a product of the culturally rich and unique communities that make up the past and currently redrawn Council District 18. Thank you to the NYC Redistricting Commission for convening us all here today and to everyone testifying today for listening to one another and advocating for your communities. If we don't defend our lines now and stand up for what needs to be kept together it is our communities in the outer-boroughs and who have dealt with decades of divestment who will feel it the most. Council District 18's do not have drastic changes- but that does not mean we can take a backseat in standing up for our communities who rely on one another everyday.