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August 22, 2022

Hon. Dennis M. Walcott, Chair
New York City Districting Commission
253 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Newly Proposed City Council District Lines for Queens Council District 26
and Manhattan Council District 5

Dear Chair Walcott and Commissioners,

I write to ask that the district lines proposed for Queens based Council District 26 and Manhattan Council District 5, which currently includes portions of Sutton Place, the Upper East Side and all of Roosevelt Island *not be adopted* for the reasons given below.

I am writing on behalf of Carnegie Hill Neighbors, a not-for-profit community quality of life and architectural preservation organization, founded in 1970, whose catchment area is mostly in Council District 4, but also encompasses the northwest portion of Manhattan Council District 5. We often speak in public forums on architectural preservation, zoning and other matters of general public concern, such as this.

Carnegie Hill Neighbors agrees largely with the recommendations made by Manhattan Community Board 8 (CB8M) in its detailed July 25 letter to the Commission.

That letter calls attention to a key issue: that large portions of the current Manhattan District 5, especially along its eastern border including Roosevelt Island, will be stripped off and assigned to Queens District 26. The population of that stripped off area will constitute only 25% of the new Queens District 26, and as a result their voices and concerns will be severely marginalized.

Three further drawbacks of the proposed redistricting deserve the Commission's attention and argue for sharply revising the current proposal.

First, as the CB8M letter points out that in terms of the criteria for drawing up districts—as set forth in City Charter Section 52 (1) (c) (d) and (e) and Section 52 (2)—at least four of the five criteria will be violated by this proposal:

- it will fail to keep neighborhoods and communities intact;
- it will fail to keep the district compact;
- it will create a crossover (two-borough) district, which should be avoided, if possible; and
- it will create an oddly shaped district.

Two items deserve mention: Roosevelt Island has always been considered a part of Manhattan; the proposed district lines will assign the Hunter College campus at 68th Street and Lexington Avenue to two separate districts.

Second, in terms of representation the proposed districts will create significant practical difficulties for the affected neighborhoods. Notably, will a Queens Council Member have a district office in Manhattan to serve the needs of the extraordinarily high percentage of seniors in Manhattan Community Districts 6 & 8? Will a Queens Council Member send representation to two additional Manhattan Community Boards? Will a Queens Council Member hold full membership on two Borough Boards? What is the likelihood that the Manhattan portion of the proposed district will ever prevail in a matter of Participatory Budgeting? Manhattan and Queens residents may hold vastly different positions on important matters of public policy including, but not limited to, congestion pricing. Which position will a Queens Council Member adopt?

Third and finally, this oddly-shaped, extreme crossover district will significantly and adversely impact the provision of municipal services and, and as pointed out above, will diminish, or better said marginalize, the political voices of thousands of Manhattan's residents.

An alternative proposal: We urge the Commission to look into the alternative proposal put forward by CB8M, provided the areas of District 4 and District 5 north of 96th Street be retained and not assigned to District 8 as CB8M proposes.

In the strongest terms possible, we urge the Commission to return to the drawing board and not adopt the proposed council districts for Queens 26 and Manhattan 5.

I thank you for your consideration and for the long hours the Commissioners have dedicated to hear in person our concerns.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lo van der Valk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lo van der Valk, President
Carnegie Hill Neighbors