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**Shahana Hanif**  
39<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

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Testimony for the NYC Districting Commission  
Submitted on August 22nd, 2022

My name is Shahana Hanif and I live in the Kensington neighborhood in Brooklyn. I've lived here my whole life with my immigrant family. Both of my parents migrated from Bangladesh several decades ago, and today, this neighborhood is home to the largest Bangladeshi community in Brooklyn. I've built deep roots in this neighborhood and am now the Council Member representing this community.

I am submitting this testimony to express the need for the South Asian community in the Kensington area to be kept together in one City Council district.

Kensington is home to a large and growing South Asian community. According to the most recent Census, the area includes over 15,000 New Yorkers of South Asian descent, over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of whom are immigrants. Together we form a distinct community that shares a common experience of working, immigrant New Yorkers from South Asia, and shares many common cultural, religious, linguistic, historical heritage and economic interests.

The South Asian community in the Kensington area stretches from Fort Hamilton Parkway to the north, 36th Street and Dahill Road to the west, Argyle Road and East 17th Street to the east, and Avenue H to the south.

In the part that I grew up in and still reside, there are several mosques in close proximity with a bustling commercial strip on McDonald Avenue with Bangladeshi-owned businesses and restaurants. Last year many taxi workers from the neighborhood and I were on a hunger strike to support their fight for debt relief. During the course of this pandemic, we've seen an uptick in delivery workers that hail from Bangladesh and call Kensington their home. They have been serving this entire City while also fighting for a dignified workplace. Organizations like Desis Rising Up & Moving and People in Need have been vital in providing much needed resources for South Asian immigrant families throughout the pandemic.

In the past, our community has been split into multiple council districts, which has led to our needs not being understood and prioritized by many of our representatives in the City Council. The South Asian community in Kensington is currently split into Council Districts 39, 40, 44, and 45. The Commission's proposed maps would not only maintain this situation, it would actually

make it worse by moving the boundary of Districts 39 and 40 west from East 7th Street to Ocean Parkway. This area, as well as the area to the south between Ditmas Avenue and Avenue H, which is currently split between Districts 40 and 45, are precisely some of the places where our community has grown the most over the last decade.

We need the Commission to fix the current splitting of our community and the challenges to getting fair representation that this situation creates by drawing a district that will include the entirety of the South Asian community.

I want to thank the many partners and advocates in the fight for fair maps and fair representation. I also want to thank the Commission for conducting an open process by sharing information and holding public hearings.