



Written Testimony

New York City Districting Commission

Submitted, Friday, August 23, 2022

By Linda Baran, President & CEO of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce

On behalf of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce and our 600 members who employ over 20,000 people, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the NYC Districting Commission regarding the drafting of a new districting plan for NYC Council Districts.

Staten Island is unique from the other boroughs located in New York City. With a population nearing half a million residents, the Borough is big enough to be an independent jurisdiction, yet it is not a politically independent entity, but part of New York City. To meet the needs of our community, the three City Council Districts here must remain intact. We cannot afford to have our district lines extended beyond Staten Island further limiting our ability to get the resources we need.

According to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau following the 2020 Census count, the Borough's population grew by 5.7% over the last decade. While Staten Island has been one of the fastest growing counties in the state for many years, infrastructure investments (in terms of highways and roads, water and sewer, schools, etc.) has not reflected its growth. There is also deep frustration and resentment - a perceived pattern of funding inequities that over the years has weakened the quality of infrastructure and services in the Borough, particularly in the transportation and health care areas. In our minds, Staten Island, as a Borough, gives a lot more money in tax revenue compared to what it gets back in public investments.

Staten Islanders see the need to address these fiscal and investment inequities as paramount. Few places take the idea of separateness as far as this Borough, and desire to develop sustainable, fair, and equitable treatment. How our Council Districts are shaped is essential to determining where the city budget and resources wind up.

It is important that the Commission treat Staten Island fairly during the redistricting process. All three Council Districts must remain whole, we must have a voice that represents the interest of Staten Islanders so that our concerns can be met – and not be forgotten!