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**THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

FARAH N. LOUIS
COUNCIL MEMBER · 45ᵀᴴ DISTRICT · BROOKLYN

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WOMEN'S CAUCUS
BROOKLYN DELEGATION

August 21, 2022

NYC Districting Commission
253 Broadway (3rd FL)
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Walcott and Members of the NYC Districting Commission,

As a lifelong Brooklynite and Council Member for the 45th District, I am writing to state my opposition to the preliminary map for Council District 45 that was released by the NYC Districting Commission on Friday, July 15th 2022, which significantly undercuts the character, infrastructure, and social resources that are staples of our beloved district.

When Council District maps are redrawn without community input, it can affect quality of life issues that the Redistricting Commission may be unaware of, such as lack of schools, food deserts and healthcare institutions to navigate alongside a persistent global health crisis. Council District 45 is one of the most unique districts within our City and when I took office, I made a commitment to this community to ensure my decisions and advocacy reflected the needs of every constituent. Therefore, I want to echo the testimonies you heard in the hearings in the last couple of days that oppose the newly proposed map.

The current preliminary map is not reflective of the diverse makeup of Council District 45. In fact, it disproportionately impacts predominantly Black, Brown, and Caribbean neighborhoods, breaking up the East Flatbush, Remsen Village and the Flatlands areas of the district. This gerrymanders the district and undermines the people that have worked for generations to build communal resistance against land grabs and improve economic stability. The new map harms schools, libraries, faith-based institutions, small businesses, and homeowners in the district, preventing them from thriving and continuing to build the strong foundation and community interests they've worked on for generations.

Altering the district from its historical coordinates compromises the growth and development of Black and Brown communities that fought to keep this district, and neighboring communities' whole over the years. The proposed map would mean Council District 45 loses parts of Flatlands, East Flatbush and Remsen Village that provide vital economic resources, like Marine Park Florists and Canarsie BJ's Shopping Mall that hire local youth; and staple educational institutions like PS207K Child Care Center, St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church-Academy, JCC Marine Park–Girls Afterschool Center, Meyer Levin Middle School and Samuel J. Tilden High School, which has been in the East Flatbush community for generations.

Removing these neighborhoods and schools drastically distorts educational opportunities and is detrimental to the development and growth of our youth and families. According to *Chapter 2-A, Section 52* of the *New York City Charter, subparagraph (c),* "District lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities

with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, economical, or other." The preliminary map clearly shows an established common interest (e.g. Flatlands area–Brooklyn Public Library–Flatlands Branch, and in Remsen Village/East Flatbush–Canarsie Shopping Mall, Tilden High School and Meyer Levin JHS) are drawn outside of the historical Council District 45 map. This alone re-enforces the need for these much needed community resources and institutions presence to remain in our district as we prepare the next generation of civically engaged leaders and professionals.

The people residing in Council District 45 have suffered in many ways—Black immigrant women having the highest rate of maternal mortality citywide; the lowest number of public schools, libraries, senior centers, parks and lack of quality healthcare institutions for vulnerable residents within the district. Issues like these become unsolvable when lines are drawn without proper focus on demographic-based solutions.
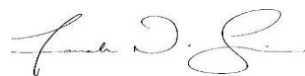
In our proposed map (https://districtr.org/plan/138988), we would keep the tightly knit communities together while expanding access to crucial resources, such as, additional schools, a quality healthcare facility (*Morris Heights Medical Center-Flatbush*) that we invested over $3 million in both FY22 and FY23 budgets to provide the best healthcare outcomes for birthing persons. In addition, I secured funding for a new senior center along Coney Island Avenue for increased recreation for AAPI seniors in our district. Keeping the district intact can be achieved while meeting the criteria mandated by the New York City Charter to increase our population up to 5%, which can include more areas of East Flatbush and Flatlands alongside our predominately Black, Brown, and Caribbean neighbors.

Furthermore, both the unity and commissions maps propose adopting more blocks within West Midwood, placing myself and the Council Member in District 44 to reside in Council District 45, potentially pitting a Black woman and Jewish man to compete in representing Council District 45. My district currently represents bordering parts of East and West Midwood, and some of those blocks should be placed within CD44 or remain the same instead of enhancing further into West Midwood. Council District's 44 and 45 should have representation reflective of their individual districts, not the opposite.

We understand the commission must adhere to the terms of the charter and increase our districts population. However, we implore the commission to consider our proposed map that includes new geographic areas that if incorporated will further support growth of existing community interests and protect the historic integrity and cultural diversity of Council District 45.

My community looks forward to a fair and equitable makeup of our district with additional schools, healthcare institutions and recreation spaces for use by the residents of our district. We ask the Redistricting Commission consider the under populated parts of our district to be solved by expanding towards eastward neighborhoods, which will reunite parts of our district that have been removed in past redistricting cycles.

Sincerely,

Council Member Farah N. Louis
New York City Council 45th District