



August 25, 2022

Mr. Dennis Walcott
Chairman
NYC Districting Commission
253 Broadway, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear NYC Districting Commission:

On July 15th, 2022, the NYC Districting Commission released its preliminary maps for the New York City Council. We, the undersigned elected officials and community leaders, believe these maps are not in the best interest of Southeast Queens residents. The greater Southeast Queens communities include New York City Council Districts 27, 28, and 31. These districts were created in the early 1990s following reapportionment, to increase the representation of the Black community.

Following convening several public meetings and centering the voices of our respective constituencies, we have collectively developed a proposed map as to how we envision SEQ representation. The 'SEQ Strong' map covers all three districts and factors in historic context, is in line with S.5160-B/A.229c, and key assets that have long been viewed as a fabric of the greater Southeast Queens community. We have attached the proposed maps for consideration of the NYC District Commission.

The maps that were released by the NYC Districting Commission break apart neighborhoods that should be kept together in accordance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965¹; keeping communities of interest intact while ensuring the voting power of our communities is not diluted. Listed below, we have outlined several concerns we seek to remedy in the SEQ Strong draft map.

District 27

- The loss of downtown Jamaica. Currently, this area is undergoing a major economic revitalization. The change in leadership could hinder ongoing projects that the current member has been working on with local organizations.
- Extending the district from the Long Island border to N. Conduit Ave. cuts in the middle of different ethnic communities and neighborhoods, which can affect effective advocacy.

¹ The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) prohibits a new district map from denying or diluting the voting power of racial and language minority groups. The City Charter also required that the district map ensures the "fair and effective representation" of racial and language minority groups protected by the VRA.

District 28

- Rochdale Village is the country's most significant minority-owned Mitchell-Lama cooperative that was designed to be a "City within a City" in Queens. This neighborhood is also known as the "Jewel of Queens" because the 20 building complex is home to 25,000 residents who represent the proud working class fabric of New York City. Residents are predominantly Black and share common historical and economic backgrounds which closely binds this community together.
- In 1992 District 28 Councilmatic lines were established and included Rochdale Village, the LIRR/Airtrain on Sutphin Blvd, a division of York College, and Aqueduct Racetrack/Resort World as a part of the economic engine for the District and Southeast Queens.
- The two malls and community center in Rochdale Village provide the residents and surrounding community with numerous amenities including shopping, banking, senior services, healthcare facilities, learning centers, socialization, and employment opportunities. It is our community's town square and a fertile ground for business owners and service providers.
- Despite this rich history of unity and growth, the Commission's map disenfranchises the Rochdale Village community by fracturing its populace that would cause confusion and dilute the origins of its strong political voice.

District 31

- The NYC Districting Commission's preliminary maps will cut out portions of Springfield Gardens, as well as long-standing institutions like the Robert Couche Senior Center, Springfield Gardens Church of the Nazarene, and the Springfield Gardens Taxpayers Association to name a few. History has shown that redrawing the lines in this way will dilute Council District 31's voting power and misalign the community's collective voice. We would like for the Commission to restore the portion of Springfield Gardens previously removed and remove the portion of Ozone Park in the preliminary map.
- The Rockaway Peninsula should remain as it currently stands and not be adjusted. The current representation on the peninsula includes a vibrant Jewish community, several NYCHA developments, Arverne by the Sea, and everything in between. There is no need to disrupt the Peninsula's representation. Each of these assets contribute to this community of interest that has led to securing workforce opportunity on the ongoing Arverne by the Sea construction, \$2 million in community benefits from the Edgemere Commons construction.

Furthermore, we are not in support of the "Unity Map" and remain concerned it does not reflect the interests of our residents, nor has the Commission engaged with local residents. In fact, it risks marginalizing Black representation by diminishing the coalitions that have developed uniquely to the three districts, and collectively across Southeast Queens.

Following the numerous community sessions with various civic organizations, community members and stakeholders convened across Southeast Queens, we collectively support the "SEQ Strong" map (<https://districtr.org/plan/138607>), which reflects the 27, 28, and 31 Council Districts.

We hope that the attached petition and letters of support for this new map does not fall on deaf ears and that the Commission recognizes that we, the signed representatives, reside and have an interest in how the future of our representation looks like.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at district31@council.nyc.gov and district27@council.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Council Majority Whip Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
New York City Council, District 31



Councilwoman Nantasha Williams
New York City Council, District 27



Senator Leroy Comrie
NYS Senator, District 14



Senator James Sanders
NYS Senator, District 10



Assemblywoman Vivian Cook
NYS Assembly Member, District 32



Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman
NYS Assembly Member, District 29



Assembly Member Clyde Vanel
NYS Assembly Member, District 33



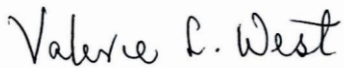
Assembly Member Khaleel Anderson
NYS Assembly Member, District 31



District Leader Anthony Andrews
NYS Assembly 32B



District Leader Fay Hill
NYS Assembly 31B



District Leader Valerie West
NYS Assembly 31A



District Leader Bob Simmons
NYS Assembly 31A



District Leader Roslin Spigner
NYS Assembly 33A



District Leader June Bunch
NYS Assembly 33B



District Leader Jamal Wilkerson
NYS Assembly 29B



Pamela Bluford
NYS Assembly 29A



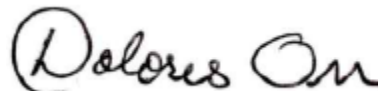
Dr. Jean Phelps
State Democratic Committeewoman/NAACP



I. Daneek Miller
NYS Assembly 33A



District Leader Preston Baker
NYS Assembly 29A



Dolores Orr
Chair, Community Board 14



Aracelia Cook
President, 149th Street S. Ozone Park Civic



William Scarborough
President, Addisleigh Park Civic Association



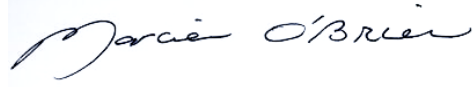
Shawn Chandler
VP, Jewel of Jamaica (Rochdale) Civic Association



Rev. Les Mullings
Community Church of the Nazarene



Pastor Lenroy Pascall
Springfield Gardens Church of the Nazarene



Marcia O'Brien
President, Rosedale Civic Association, Inc.