



THE COUNCIL OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Hello. My name is Rita Joseph, and I have the privilege of serving as the Council Member for the 40th Council District in Brooklyn. First, I'd like to thank the NYC Districting Commission for allowing me to share my thoughts on this critically important redistricting process.

Today, I'd like to share my support of the proposed structure of Council District 40, with one relatively minor comment. The western border of District 40, from Park Circle down to Newkirk Avenue, should be one straight line down Ocean Parkway. By having a clear, delineated border of one major road, residents will be able to easily know which Council District they're in. This is in contrast to the current proposed line, which has the western border of District 40 jutting in and out, making it confusing for people to know who represents them in the City Council.

Right now, the current northern border of District 40 is Empire Boulevard, which makes it extremely easy for residents in the neighborhood to know which Council District they are in (35 or 40). Kensington residents deserve to have that same convenience of knowing which District they live in (39 or 40).

As we all know, government can often be confusing and inaccessible to regular people. This prevents people from participating in key activities, such as voting, reaching out to their elected officials to get assistance, and receiving access to social services. One of my biggest focuses during my time in office has been making government easier to understand for our neighbors. By making the western border of District 40 one straight, clean line, government will be just slightly more accessible and more readily understandable for our neighbors.

Importantly, making the border one straight line will not weaken or dilute the voting power of the vibrant immigrant, south Asian community in Kensington. Ensuring that the voices of historically marginalized ethnic communities is a priority for me. As a proud immigrant myself, strengthening the voting power of immigrant communities is deeply personal, and changing the border at Coney Island Avenue will protect the South Asian Vote in Central Brooklyn.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to go on the record with my opposition to three stand-alone districts in Staten Island. Because state law mandates a maximum of a 5% population deviation per district, three stand-alone districts in Staten Island will create a cascading effect across the entirety of our city, which may jeopardize the compactness of central Brooklyn and potentially dilute the voting power of communities of color and common interest.