



Queens Jewish Community Council, Inc.

119-45 UNION TURNPIKE, FOREST HILLS, NY 11375 (718) 544-9033 * FAX (718) 544-8011 • www.qjcc.org

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September 28, 2022

Attention, Redistricting Commission,
Dennis Walcott, Chair
Dr. John Fleteau, Executive Director

We write to you as representatives of the Jewish Community regarding what the Redistricting Commission has proposed regarding splitting the Jewish Community in Council District 24 in Queens.

When the initial redistricting plan was published, the Jewish Community was shocked to see the Hillcrest/Fresh Meadows Community – a pillar of the Orthodox Jewish Community – was completely removed from the 24th District, diluting that community's ability to have its interests represented with a united voice. The Commission failed to meet the criterion set out "keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other." The Jewish Community is once again shocked that after so many pleas from local Jewish Community leaders to preserve and keep that community together, the Commission presented a proposal on September 22nd that once again fails to preserve that Community.

Despite the efforts of the Orthodox Community over the last 70 years to build and grow that Community in Council District 24 (District 24 in its current configuration is home to thousands of Orthodox Jewish families, almost a hundred Orthodox Synagogues, and many other Jewish Community centers and ritual facilities), that Community remains a distinct religious minority in the 24th District, which demands that the Orthodox Community be kept intact and retain the ability to be represented as one community. This Community has common concerns – every one of its religious facilities is utilized every day of the week, multiple times a day, by children and adults alike. By any meaningful metric, the Orthodox Jewish Community of District 24 is in a sustained period of growth, especially in the area that is proposed to be removed from the 24th District. We are therefore compelled to state the following:

The updated proposed redistricting map for Council District 24 is not in the Orthodox Community's interest in its current form. The Jewish Community in the current configuration of Council District 24 is composed of the combined Sefardi and Ashkenazi communities. These two communities are unified in interest and location, each with members and synagogues interspersed amongst each other. It is one contiguous chain linking together Kew Garden Hills, Fresh Meadows/Hillcrest, and Jamaica Estates. Though there are pockets of our community in other areas as well, this chain of neighborhoods represents the largest Jewish voice in Queens, and cutting any portion out would result in an unacceptable disenfranchisement.

Funded by the Office of the Queens Borough President, NYC Dept for the Aging, NYS Office for the Aging & Administration on Aging, NYC Dept of Health & Community Development, NYC Council, NYS Assembly, NYS Senate, NYS Dept of Parks & Historic Preservation, NYS Office of Mental Health, NYC Dept of Mental Health, NYC Dept of Cultural Affairs, NY Council on Jewish Poverty and UJA Federation of NY

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The proposed change to the current District map completely disregards the reality on the ground. It artificially and needlessly separates many community members from the religious institutions and facilities that serve them. Furthermore, the seemingly arbitrary lines harmfully cut off one community and congregation from its fellow community and congregation. The net result is a weakened Orthodox Jewish community, structurally, demographically, and politically.

The area of this Community that we advocate to remain intact – the area east of Utopia Parkway all the way to the existing District 24 boundary – comprises 3,888 people according to the Commission's numbers. So, retaining 3,888 people to keep the Orthodox Jewish Community contiguous and intact the Commission has not done, yet the Commission seeks to add almost TWENTY SIX THOUSAND people to the 24th District from non-Jewish areas that are not currently part of the 24th District. We see this as adding insult to injury.

For these reasons we strongly believe that the redistricting proposal's continued disregard for the Jewish Community is damaging to the community's very fabric, its unified voice, and its interests. We implore the Redistricting Commission to keep to the criteria it is charged to uphold, immediately restore the 3,888 people in the area east of Utopia Parkway north of 75th Avenue and keep the eastern boundary of the District as it exists today.

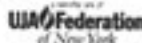
Sincerely,

Queens Jewish Community Council
Michael Nussbaum Mayer Waxman
President Executive Director

New York Board of Rabbis
Rabbi Joseph Potasnik
Executive Vice President

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