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Good morning,

My name is Inna Vernikov and I am the councilmember representing the 48th council district in Southern Brooklyn.

I submit this testimony in support of keeping my district together as it stands, specifically the parts of my district consisting of communities of Russian speaking and Ukrainian immigrants- mainly Brighton Beach and Trump village.

As someone who immigrated from Ukraine as a child, it was heartbreaking for me to watch the place where I was born be torn apart and attacked by a brutal dictator back in February. The war on Ukraine continues to shatter families and it already took thousands of innocent lives.

There are approximately 150,000 Ukrainian Americans in New York city, split between the East Village and Brighton Beach. A large chunk of them are concentrated throughout Brighton Beach. Many of them have family and loved ones back in Ukraine and some of them are trying to bring their families here. Many of them are already here in New York and are settling on Brighton Beach.

Since February, I've been vocal in my support for the people of Ukraine and for the community of Ukrainian immigrants. My office has been very involved with assisting them by working together with Catholic Migration legal services as well as connecting them with other pro-bono help. I've worked with the community to send 300 boxes of aid to Ukraine. We've been assisting Ukrainian refugees find housing, receive benefits, supplies and any other help they may need.

At a time such as this, it is especially important for the Russian speaking/Ukrainian community of immigrants to not only be represented by a Ukrainian born American, but to be kept together and not be split. It effects the resources they're receiving and the support they need.

I also represent constituents from the Orthodox community, which is a very tight knit community of interest. It is also important to keep them together.

In fact, It should be noted that my colleague, the councilmember for the 47th district, the district into which there is a push to bring these communities into, agrees. About ten years ago, he fought very hard to make sure that the Russian speaking/Ukrainian community is united. He was successful in accomplishing that and he is therefore very well aware of the importance of keeping this community together. The fact that he is now asking to break this community apart because it's politically beneficial for him is unsettling.

Thank you for your time and consideration and for the work and effort you have put into this complicated project.

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