

In Re City of New York 2022-2023 Districting Commission Brooklyn
Public Hearing
June 29, 2022

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CITY OF NEW YORK
2022-2023 DISTRICTING COMMISSION
BROOKLYN PUBLIC HEARING

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285 Jay Street,
Brooklyn, New York 11201

DATE: June 29, 2022

PUBLIC HEARING in the above-referenced
matter, held at the above-mentioned date and
location, transcribed by Jeanna Qvistgaard, a
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A P P E A R A N C E S:
DENNS M. WALCOTT, Chair
CRYSTAL HUDSON, Council Member
CHI OSSE, Council Member
WILLIAM STAMFORD, JR.
DR. JOHN FLATEAU, executive director

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(Whereupon, the audio started.)

ANNOUNCER: All right, we will get started. I am -- and we're waiting on Zoom here, they can't see us just yet, but we do want to respect your time here. We will start with our in-person testimony. We will have two city council members to testify.

So, we'll start with council member Hudson, followed by council member Osse. And I'll remind everyone, each speaker has three minutes, approximately.

CRYSTAL HUDSON: Thank you so much. I'm the New York City council member for Brooklyn's 35th District, which encompasses the neighborhoods, Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, Fort Green, Clinton Hill and Bedford Stuyvesant. And thank you to Chair Walcott, Executive Director Dr. Plato, and the New York City District in Commission, for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

I previously submitted testimony in

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May, in which I explained my connection to this district, and would like to repeat some of that today.

I'm a third generation Brooklynite and the daughter and granddaughter of Jamaican and Honduran immigrants. I was the only child of a single mother, who served as a nurse for more than 30 years at Harlem Hospital, and raised me in the same Prospect Heights community her father laid roots in, when he immigrated from Jamaica in the 1940s. I now live in a home my mother worked hard to buy 30 years ago, and I have now planted roots of my own here in central Brooklyn.

My story is not unique. The 35th District, is home to many folks like me, from various backgrounds, from multi-generational Caribbean immigrant families in the Lobovich community in Crown Heights and the Bedford Stuyvesant, to long-time Black American families in Fort Green, Clinton Hill and

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Prospect Heights, all of whom have deep ties to these communities.

More than 14 thousand of these residents live in NYCHA developments in the district. Atlantic Terminal, Lafayette Gardens, Ingersoll Houses, Farragut Houses, and Walt Whitman Houses. The last three, of which used to be one development called Fort Green Houses. These developments serve as much of the cultural fabric of the 35th District.

Our district is also home to newer, predominantly white Brooklynite's, who want to plant roots in a diverse community and contribute to it's growth and prosperity. Diversity and history, in particular Black history and culture, is what makes the 35th District so unique.

We also have the black retail owners and restauranteurs who set up shop along Fulton Street, Myrtle Avenue, Washington Avenue, Franklin Avenue,

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Nostrand Avenue and more.

The families that come out every year to the West Indian Day Parade along Eastern Parkway, and the ones who come out in droves each year to the Brooklyn Academy of Music to enjoy Dance Africa, in addition to BAM, and its host of performing arts facilities, families of all backgrounds pay regular visits to the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Jewish Children's Museum, Mark Morris Dance Center, Theater for a New Audience, and so many other smaller performing arts spaces and artistic hubs. It is these people and cultural institutions that are the reason the 35th District is so special.

As the Commission considers new boundaries for councilmanic districts, I urge you to prioritize the needs of the very communities that have never been prioritized before, and ensure central Brooklyn retains it's unique characteristic as home to a myriad of

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Brooklynites from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, as it has for generations.

This councilmanic district has been home to the West Indian Day American Parade since the 1930s, and the Chabad headquarters since 1940. Our current district is centered around numerous iconic community and cultural destinations, and these hubs serve the numerous communities of the 35th District, and provide unique community services, from recreation, to culture, to education.

Thankfully, the 35th District has a population deviation under 5 percent, with the current lines, and should not need to see radical changes to its boundaries to fit the charter required deviation requirement, with specific regard to district boundaries.

We must ensure Flatbush Avenue remains the western boundary of this district, as has historically been the

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case. To move any district boundaries across the de facto highway, will only separate communities of interest and prevent the cohesion of a unified district that has been standing together for generations. I will be submitting written testimony along with a proposed map.

Thank you. I was trying to read very fast to hit the three minutes, appreciate the time.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you, council member Hudson. I'll pause for a second, and note that our Chair, Dennis Walcott, is participating on Zoom. So I'll go ahead and give him a moment to introduce himself.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you very much. Good afternoon to all. I apologize for not being there, but I am doing grandparent duty today. So I am with my two grandchildren, so my apologies, but I will be participating and listening to the entire hearing. So

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thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Everyone got that?
Thank you, Chair Walcott.

Council member Osse.

CHI OSSE: I got to step down for
this. Good afternoon, everyone,
Chair Walcott, Dr. Flateau. My name is
Chi Osse, city council member
representing the 36th District,
including the neighborhoods of Bed-Stuy,
in Northern Crown Heights.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to
participate in this essential part of
the democratic process, in which we draw
the lines that determine our
representation at the most local and
intimate level of government.

As a current representative for my
district, I'm deeply familiar with the
schools, communities, businesses and
blocks that compromise the
36 Councilmanic District. I testify
today on behalf of my neighbors and in
defense of their best interest.

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Bed-Stuy and Northern Crown Heights, are historically Black neighborhoods, famous nationwide for their cultural contributions and bonded through collective memory. The two neighborhoods have grown closer together with the influx of Caribbean immigrants, whose food, music and fashion are now integral parts of our shared spaces.

While clear cultural boundaries exist between ours and neighboring districts, the cohesion of Bed-Stuy and North Crown Heights is strong, and our unification in a single district, has served us well for decades.

On that, since the last census, we have lost only a few thousand residents. This would justify slightly expanding our borders to realign our population with the council district standard. Recognizing the strong and growing connection between Bed-Stuy and North Crown Heights, the most logical and culturally responsive way to do so,

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would be to unify North Crown Heights, a cohesive and defined historic district, occupying several blocks above Eastern Parkway into District 36.

Our neighborhoods deserve a unified district to provide them with a unified voice, which they use to advocate for their shared interest. For fair, demographic representation, I urge this body to draw from my neighbors, what they need and deserve, a district closely mirroring its current successful lines, expanded to include the whole of North Crown Heights.

As someone that grew up in North Crown Heights, had a father that grew up in North Crown Heights, and a grandmother who moved to North Crown Heights from Haiti, I understand the deep Black history that needs to be preserved under a single council member in alignment with the historic deep black history and representation within Bed-Stuy.

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2 While they are two neighborhoods,
3 they are two very cohesive
4 neighborhoods, and that is seen through
5 the representation that the community
6 has seen for decades. The unification
7 of North Crown Heights, is something
8 that, you know, residents have been
9 asking for and wanting to see through
10 representation, so that everyone is
11 represented equally.

12 So thank you so much for letting me
13 testify this afternoon, and looking
14 forward to hearing and seeing all of you
15 soon. Thanks.

16 ANNOUNCER: We're going to continue
17 our in-person testimony. Next we have
18 William Stamford, Jr.

19 WILLIAM STAMFORD, JR.: I just want
20 to inform the executive director and
21 Dennis, Okay passing Master P. Starting
22 public hearings before 6 p.m., is a bad
23 idea, which I mentioned in Queens, okay.
24 You made some careless mistakes. You
25 have a microphone inside, you have no

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2 microphone outside, so those who are on
3 that side, have to squirm like an
4 octopus, in order to reach this
5 microphone. Not very swift, okay.

6

7 Regardless of "public hearing," you
8 didn't mention where exactly it was
9 scheduled to be held. Yeah, no post
10 assigned. I asked a female CUNY guard
11 where, like I said, where was it
12 scheduled to be held, and she ignored
13 me, which I don't appreciate. If she
14 was aware of this event, she should have
15 known where it was going to be held,
16 okay.

16

17 And regarding that book you gave us,
18 does it include the City Council
19 district lines? No. Does it include
20 the -- well, forget that. It should
21 have the council district lines. It
22 should mention -- put them in the book.

22

23 And also, who's mentioned; who's
24 representing them? It'd be easy for us
25 to testify, if you include the maps in
the book you gave us. In Queens, you

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didn't post any maps, here in Brooklyn, you didn't post any maps, which I find disturbing. You need to post the maps from this point on. Include the maps, include the council member. Regarding the council member, include their names and indicate which district they represent, okay.

Also in the future, please start your public hearings at a time when more people can make it. We start them after 6:00, not before. Don't start them at a time when people are still working, that's not very swift. If you want to continue starting before 6:00, that's fine with me, but this is what you can expect.

So is it -- is this the New York City District Commission or is it the MTA, which stands for "money thrown away"? Because this is what would've happened if the MTA were here, hearing-wise. You would say that a dead -- a dead attendant -- it's a dead

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auditorium. Don't imitate the MTA, which stands for "money throw away," please. Don't imitate the RGB a/k/a, the Red Cards Board, okay.

As I said before, as I said on Monday, take your time and do it right, like the SOS parent. Okay, that's all I have to say.

And also, regarding your future programs, you need to advertise them better, because as I stated on Monday, the events you held for that day, I was unaware of them. So as I said, take your time and do it right, like the SOS Band.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next we have Kimberly Whitehead.

KIMBERLY WHITEHEAD: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Walcott, Executive Director Flateau, and the New York City Districting Commission, for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the commission's upcoming work to draft a new districting plan for the

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New York City Council Districts.

My name is Kimberly Whitehead, Senior Vice President for Strategy and Chief of Staff at Medgar Evers College. My college is located in the 35th Council District. Established in 1970, Medgar Evers College is a multi-cultural, multi-generational college, with social justice in its DNA, born out of the unwavering and stalwart advocacy of citizens -- of the citizens of central Brooklyn.

Today, I proudly stand representing more than 4,100 students and 908 faculty and staff, who call Medgar Evers College home, through their studies and work and possess a great love for this college and this community, more specifically, 276 students and 68 team members reside in District 35. Medgar Evers, through our academic -- academic programs, academic support services and communicate -- community advocacy programs, serves as a beacon of

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educational, cultural and social activity, for the citizens of Crown Heights.

One such community advocacy program, is our Transition Academy, that not only provides wraparound services for students, but also addresses housing, food insecurity, for the broader Crown Heights community.

84 percent of our students who attend Meg, also stay in the state they know and love and use their talent, skills and knowledge as contributors to the workforce in support of the state and local economy. As a trained geneticist, I know well the power of diversity and the robustness, resilience and fortitude, diversity contributes to organizations and communities. The strength of our diverse community is what makes the 35th District home.

Historically, the 35th District has included residents from different backgrounds. We need to work to ensure

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the 35th District maintains its diversity. The commission should prioritize the needs of the very communities that have historically not been prioritized, to ensure central Brooklyn retains its unique characteristics as home to Brooklyn residents, from diverse and racial backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds.

As such, I urge you to keep the district lines as similar as possible to what they currently are. This district has a population deviation from the ideal population of less than 5 percent under the current lines, and does not require changes to its boundaries to fit the charter required deviation.

Commissioners, I urge you to ensure main arteries like Flatbush Avenue, continue to be boundaries of this district, to maintain the integrity of existing communities. It is imperative that we ensure council districts truly include neighborhoods and communities.

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Thank you, for your time and the opportunity to testify today.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Norman Lafond.

DR. NORMAN LAFOND: Good afternoon, I'm Dr. Norman Lafond. I'm the Chair of the Manhattan Policy Forum, an Upper West Side, Good Government Club, in Manhattan. My wife Audrey and I, are long-term residents of the Upper West Side and Park West Village. Audrey has lived in Park West Village, since 1979 and I have as well, since we married in the year 2000.

I'm here to testify to the growth of District 7 in our neighborhood, as part of the redistricting process. We are fortunate to have a neighborhood rich in economic, ethnic and religious diversity. We have everything in this area; facilities for low-income elderly, public housing, middle-class condominiums, luxury high-rises, rent stabilized tenants, and market-rate

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tenants.

We have the elderly, young families with school-age children, and middle-aged empty nesters. But we manage to work for each other for a very special and inclusive community. Unfortunately, our city council district line split the community in two, on Broadway. This east-west divide has been an old one, splitting District 6 and 7, and may have been useful in the distant past, but it's clearly no longer useful.

The community on either side of Broadway, has shared common interest and needs. We shop at the same stores, we worship together and volunteer together. And yet we live in a district that arbitrarily splits us apart. For example, my wife and I attend services at Holy Name of Jesus Church on 97th and Amsterdam. We also attend Anche Chesed synagogue on 100th and West End, and we are joined by our congregations that

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live on both sides of Broadway.

And another example, the commercial corridor between 196th Street along Columbus Avenue, runs through Park West Village in District 7. But this also serves many of the constituents in the adjacent parts of District 6. Residents on both sides of Broadway, are invested in the success of this commercial corridor. Our community shops there and works there.

Finally, our residents on either side of Broadway, take the 1 trains and the A trains, and use the same exit off of the West Side Highway, to get home. We face the same sanitation issues, as evidenced by our shared commitment to cleaning up Broadway Mall, and advocating for more composting, and other such projects.

We are joined in our efforts to pursue many shared projects, including the park to park open streets that spans the entire west side, down 103rd Street.

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And so it seems, the most beneficial way for District 7 to increase, is by expanding west of Broadway and south of 109th, as you may deem necessary.

It is critical, for example, that Park West Village, where I happen to live, remain a part of District 7. This complex, which includes many rent stabilized apartments, and hundreds of middle-class homeowners, along 97th and 100th, from Central Park West to Amsterdam, constantly turn out high numbers in every election. In fact, we brag about it. We have the higher voter -- highest voter participation rate in the state.

And they have found a strong voice in local politics, because they have become engaged in what's going on in the neighborhood. Our voice would be greatly diluted if we were forced to find new footing in a district that has different priorities and very different needs. And we would be cut off from our

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neighbors to the north, that are part of our neighborhood family.

As for one other point that you may want to look at, I would also point out that the redistricting process can also remedy another obvious issue in the current map, on the Upper West Side, Manhattan Valley, which is that the Towers on the Park complex and 110th, there are two of them. One on the north side, one on the south side. One is in District 7. The north side of the street is in District -- I think District 10 -- I'm going to have to -- District 9, excuse me. So they both surely should be, clearly should be, in District 7.

They have a common board, they have their, you know, obviously the same condominium association, so that creates some problems for them as well. By the way, the District 7 side has managed to be able to get a voting site put into the building, which has been helpful to

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getting increasing voter participation,
as well.

So I thank you very much, and I hope
that you're able to help us with this
problem. Have a nice day.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Now we're
going to move to our neighbors on Zoom.
Who do we have up first?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Frank
Lachapelle.

ANNOUNCER: Yes we can, thank you.

Frank LACHAPELLE: Well, I do want
to say thank you to the Commission for
letting me have my testimony today, and
also to the public that is listening
live.

Good evening, my name is Frank
Lachapelle, and I am a lifelong resident
and voter of City Council District 36,
which is comprised of Bed-Stuy and North
Crown Heights. In this district, my
mother gave birth to me at Woodhull
Hospital, where I was raised in Tompkins
NYCHA housing, where I gained most of my

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early childhood public education, and now I currently have the opportunity too, as a member of my local Community Board 3.

When my parents migrated from the Dominican Republic, they landed in Brooklyn, more specifically, Bed-Stuy, as did many of my fellow neighbors. In this district, we've grown in culture, arts, and community. Once you step foot in this district, anyone from any walk of life will feel like they're at home. The residents of our community have stayed the same because of that same home-like feeling, which ultimately laid down a rich history that's been shared with generations and generations to come.

I ask to continue to leave the maps the same or similar to how it's been for the last decade. One word that comes to mind is relationships. We grow together, unified and caring for one another through relationships. Not only

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2 have we grown that relationship with
3 each other, but we've also grown the
4 relationship with our local
5 representative, who is the champion for
6 our district. It is in the best
7 interest of the neighborhood that we
8 continue to have this relationship by
9 continuing to work together with that
10 bond that we've built, with that bond
11 and with the potential of the map
12 remaining the same.

13 We, as the Bed-Stuy and North Crown
14 Heights family can accomplish more for
15 the present and the future. It is
16 imperative that the district and
17 commission keep that in mind, so that we
18 can continue to build upon the culture,
19 arts, and community that we build hard
20 -- that we took -- it took very hard for
21 us to obtain.

22 Thank you very much.

23 ANNOUNCER: Thank you. We can take
24 another neighbor from Zoom.

25 ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Paul

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Spring.

ANNOUNCER: Sorry, can you repeat that?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Paul Spring.

ANNOUNCER: Paul Spring, are you there? We can move on to someone else.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Stephanie Wong.

STEPHANIE WONG: Hi, I'm here. Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

ANNOUNCER: Yes we can, thank you.

MS. WONG: Okay, good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Wong. I'm a resident in Bensonhurst for almost 40 years. And I am the personnel of the United Chinese Association of Brooklyn, where I founded this organization 20 years ago. Asian Pacific American community in Bensonhurst, is a community of interest and should be kept whole as possible in a district. Currently, Bensonhurst is divided into four city council districts. So APAs are not a majority in any of these four current districts. Over the last ten years, the APA

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2 population of New York City increased by
3 about 345,000 residents. Between 2010
4 and 2020, the APA population in Brooklyn
5 alone, increased by 43 percent. To keep
6 the APA community in Bensonhurst as
7 whole as possible, we believe that a
8 district can be created that will result
9 in a near majority APA city council
10 district. This is the possible ways and
11 40 percent overall increase in APAs and
12 a 46 percent increase among the
13 voting-age population in Brooklyn.

14 There are now over a quarter million
15 APAs in Brooklyn alone. This means that
16 around one out of four APA's in New York
17 City, is a resident of Brooklyn. Many
18 of these APAs live in an area that spans
19 from parts of Central Park, Bensonhurst,
20 Homecrest and the Sheepshead Bay.
21 Unlike Manhattan's, China Town or
22 Flushing's China Town, Bensonhurst does
23 not have crowds of people and the noisy
24 street vendors.

25 There are Chinese grocery stores,

1
2 restaurants, nail-hair salons, auto
3 repair shops, day care centers,
4 community centers for the elderly,
5 medical clinics and a Chinese-Christian
6 church. A Salvation Army that offers
7 parades in Cantonese. I have personally
8 witnessed the growth in the APA
9 community in Bensonhurst, by seeing the
10 number of Chinese immigrant families
11 move into this neighborhood to settle.

12 As you may be aware, the APA
13 community in Bensonhurst, that is
14 currently spread across four city
15 council districts, share many community
16 resources, and the need, including,
17 language access, culturally sensitive
18 services, public safety, affordable
19 housing, public transportation lines and
20 the linguistic landscape.

21 It is extremely important that the
22 APA community be kept whole as possible,
23 mainly because there is a strong need
24 for more equitable community
25 representation. And to have our voices

1
2 included in the decision-making process.
3 For example, with issues like,
4 incorporating more homeless shelters
5 into our neighborhood, the other
6 neighborhoods. Fighting anti-hate --
7 Asian hate crimes in the neighborhood,
8 the other neighborhoods, and the subway,
9 and the converting invisibility -- the
10 invisibility of the anti-Asian races in
11 our community.

12 Our power should not be diluted.
13 This will give us more equal power to
14 have our need for more culturally
15 sensitive bilingual services addressed.
16 Therefore, I'm urging you, the
17 commission, to recognize the community
18 of interest, herby, drawing lines that
19 do not divide the community, and instead
20 keeping the APA community in
21 Bensonhurst, as whole as possible.
22 Please help us, we need you guy's help.

23 Thank you for the commissioner give
24 us this -- a chance to express our
25 concern, and we really need your help.

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Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Now we'll start alternating, in-person and Zoom, so we'll move to Luis Cruz.

MR. GOLD: Madam Chair, can I just ask the speakers, this is Commissioner Gold. When they talk about communities, to give us a general definition of the boundaries of the community they're talking about, because our first two speakers, the council members, both talked about Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights, and to get a better sense of what they think is the community of interest that should be kept together.

I -- I would like to make sure we understand what communities of interest they think should be kept together. I'd like them to just quickly go over what the boundaries of the districts that they think the new district should encompass. And perhaps, we could just quickly ask the people who've spoken to, to spend 10 seconds or 15 seconds

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defining the boundaries of the district, whether or not it's the current district or the slightly changed districts, based on the communities that they represent.

ANNOUNCER: So, just so we're clear, we're asking that each speaker, if you can spend 10, 15 seconds, kind of, explaining the boundaries of the current district that you're referring to. I think that's the gist of the request.

MR. GOLD: I would like them to just describe the boundaries of the district they'd like to see, whether it's based on the current districts or based on the community of interest where the communities are located. But I did, as I've noted the first two council members who spoke, talked about the same communities, and I'd like to have a clearer idea of what the boundaries are that they are advocating for. Really, not necessarily the current districts, but what they would like to see.

ANNOUNCER: One second. Okay, after

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Luis Cruz testifies, then we can have the council members come up and clarify the boundaries and the communities of interest, please.

LUIS CRUZ: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Luis Cruz, I am a resident -- sorry.

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Luis Cruz, I am a resident of Washington Heights in District 7. I am here to testify regarding the growth of City Council District 7 and 10, in Upper Manhattan.

I urge the commission to include the Polo Ground Towers as part of the District 10, and to keep 160s and 150 west of Amsterdam, as part of District 7.

This approach will ensure that Black and Latino communities in Upper Manhattan, continue to have adequate representation.

Washington Heights, has been always represented by at least two members of

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city council, and it is crucial that this continue to be the case. By having representation from two council members, the programs in our community -- in our community, have more success getting funding from the city. We have strong advocacy for the challenges that we face.

If the Commission were to put Washington Heights in just one district, we will lose money, programs and we will lose our voice. The Latino population in District 7, will be especially hurt, if Washington Heights were cut out of the district, as will dramatically change who votes in the district. As a young man, I can also tell you that our schools need -- need as much help as they can get.

This is why it is important that our Community Health Academy of the Heights, the only high school in District 7, remain in District 7. If the school is moved to District 10, that will mean

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that District 10 is now responsible for three high schools, while District 7 will be responsible for none. Our schools need more attention than that.

The best way to ensure that District 10 and District 7 grows in a way that protects the interest of each community in District 10, is to include the Polo Grounds. The Polo Grounds is the home to the people with the same background and facing the same challenges as the people in District 10. They will have the same interest electing the council member responsible for Coogan's Bluff, which is already part of District 10, each side of congress votes to have a say in who will represent the area.

We need our communities, we need empowered communities, we need our communities to be represented so that our communities improve for a better future.

Thank you so much.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Now we'll

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have -- I think council member Hudson,
is ready to come back up.

CRYSTAL HUDSON: Yes, thank you.
So, I just wanted to -- to clarify, I
think both of us in our testimonies said
that we would like, and I know
obviously, you know, it's redistricting,
but we would like our borders to be kept
as similar to our current lines as
possible.

And you know, I guess, I also noted
at the very end of my testimony, that
I'm going to be submitting a map. So
the map that I submit, along with my
longer written testimony, will have all
the lines, and the borders, and the
specific streets. But I will just note
that, I think in -- there should be some
sort of effort to keep community
districts together and whole.

And so, you know, I have on the
western side of my district, Atlantic
Avenue as a natural, sort of, dividing
line between my district and council

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2 member Osse's district. And so, I
3 think, you know, we can explore options,
4 or you all should potentially explore
5 options, to use a major thoroughfare
6 like that. But you know, I didn't -- I
7 didn't come today with the specific
8 lines, because I'll be submitting the
9 testimony, written testimony, that would
10 include the map with specific borders.
11 Thank you.

12 ANNOUNCER: Council member Osse.

13 CHI OSSE: Hi again. I would
14 absolutely love to uplift and echo the
15 sentiments of council member Hudson,
16 especially in terms of hoping that the
17 lines can stay intact as possible, as
18 they have been over the past 10 years,
19 and this has been, you know, an
20 evaluation that we've made -- well, I've
21 made. I'll speak for myself with
22 constituents, both in Bed-Stuy and in
23 North Crown Heights.

24 You know, Bed-Stuy, again, is a
25 unified district within how it's drawn

1
2 out currently, as is, and that's very
3 important to the constituency in the
4 community. The map -- the maps as they
5 are, do speak for themselves, but I also
6 do want to uplift, you know, a statement
7 that I made within my -- my testimony,
8 that Northern Crown Heights, but also,
9 in the residence of Northern Crown
10 Heights, would truly appreciate and
11 honestly succeed off being a unified
12 district.

13 So, there is a natural border at
14 Eastern Parkway, which really signifies,
15 you know, the split between Northern
16 Crown Heights and Southern Crown
17 Heights, and that would be, you know, in
18 -- an additional, you know, expansion to
19 the district, given that there was
20 slight, you know, loss of population
21 over the past 10 years.

22 I hope that -- that made sense, but
23 I also will submit testimony, as well as
24 clarification, on specific avenues and
25 streets that would give you a better

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picture of what the lines should look like. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: I think now, we'll head back to Zoom. Who do we have up next, please?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We're going to try Paul Spring.

ANNOUNCER: Paul Spring.

PAUL SPRING: Hello, thank you for that. Switched to my phone because my computer wasn't working. Yeah, I want to follow up, Mr. Osse, and earlier, Frank Lachapelle, in asking that District 36, not be changed and -- and not be -- and not have Crown Heights removed. I think that the current district lines work in great harmony with Assembly District 56. And they maintain a whole historic Bed-Stuy in one piece, as well as, keeping North Crown Heights within. So, I just wanted to say that piece, and I'll also be submitting written testimony with more detail.

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ANNOUNCER: Thank you. I think we can take someone else from Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Okay, we have Zulema Blair.

ANNOUNCER: I'm sorry, can you repeat that.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Zulema Blair.

ANNOUNCER: Zulema Blair.

ZULEMA BLAIR: Hi, good evening, everyone. My name is Dr. Zulema Blair. I'm a professor at Medgar Evers College. I'm also the redistricting research director for the Center for Law and Social Justice, and the interim executive director for the Dubois Bunche Center for Public Policy.

Good evening, to all. Good afternoon, to all the commissioners and everyone on the dash and to both council members from districts I'm very familiar with.

I want to start by saying the Center for Law and Social Justice, and engaging in the redistricting process, we look at

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all districts throughout the five boroughs in totality. We do not draw or map any district in isolation, because we are concerned about the communities of interest for people of African descent throughout the five boroughs.

We also know that there are differences between the different levels of government; congressional district lines and State Assembly district lines. We cannot assume that they would mimic city council lines. And so city council, they stay right here in New York City and rally the troops, if you will, for lived legislation and use the community as their backbone.

Having said that, the city council need to maintain as much as possible of its boundaries. We know that there are some changes, because there are -- have been a lot of development, gentrification included. But also a lot of immigration and remigration of population.

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2 So for example, in Districts 35 and
3 36, where I was raised in 35 and work in
4 35. If we separate or use Eastern
5 Parkway as the boarder, we would be
6 separating Crown Heights, we would be
7 creating two separate communities, we
8 cannot do that. It would be creating a
9 tale of two districts, if you will. One
10 side are very poor that don't utilize
11 all the aspects and features of District
12 35. Versus another side, where many
13 shops and restaurants and bars,
14 etcetera, and people attend and go to
15 school together throughout District 35.

16 The historic Prospect Heights,
17 churches, communities, etcetera, and as
18 noted before, the West Indian American
19 Carnival Association and the museum.
20 District 36, we have to keep the
21 boundaries as is, as much as possible.
22 We can extend the western boundary a
23 little bit over, maybe one block off --
24 for Classon Avenue, which some say is a
25 natural boundary for Bedford-Stuyvesant,

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and I will get some arguments there.

So, in keeping with the 13 districts of people of African descent in the city council and also the 10 communities of interest that we have throughout the Bronx, and Brooklyn, and Queens, we maintained that Sheepshead Bay remain in District 46, Sheepshead Bay Housing.

That in District 46, which is the Canarsie area, that we also have the Rockaway Parkway train station placed in that district because that serves the districts of Canarsie, also the small business area, etcetera. We maintain that Coney Island should be with all the beach areas, so that it would not be an isolated area, and would not be left out of the conversation when hurricane Ida super-storm, or another super-storm, or another hurricane approaches that area.

For Staten Island, we had to take 20,000 people from Brooklyn, so that was Dyker Heights in the Fort Hamilton Parkway area. For Queens, our beloved

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Queens, we need to keep 31 with Far Rockaway. Extend it just a little bit for population purposes, so that we maintain three districts of people of African descent, because we know that there are some conversions of different populations.

We think that there are -- since there's still 8,000 people in South Ozone Park, that we cannot relinquish South Ozone Park. It's too much people of African descent to just be pushed back to a different boundary and lose a district.

We think -- not think, we know, District 9 is central Harlem. And in central Harlem, there are a lot of firsts, there are a lot of historical movements and institutions, such as the Polo Grounds. And that has to remain the same, because central Harlem is what we have for people of African descent. And all the institutions and forces that are there, should remain the same.

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2 The Northern Bronx, we have a
3 significant community of interest now
4 sprinkled throughout. The Northern
5 Bronx maintains it, but we think
6 Wakefield has been left out of the
7 conversation. Large Caribbean, utilizes
8 all the institutions there. The Mosholu
9 Parkway Golf Course, etcetera, for all
10 of its events. It should not -- it
11 should be placed in District 12 and
12 leave the border at Gunhill Road. And
13 we have a significant community of
14 interest in the Allerton area, right
15 below Gunhill Road.

16 So -- and keep trying to keep
17 Crotona Park East whole, because we're
18 growing back again in the South Bronx,
19 and it -- actually, in that area in
20 District 16, where other districts were
21 losing people of African descent, that
22 district has grown. So, more
23 unification in that area. Thank you.

24 ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next up, we
25 have Robert Smith III.

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ROBERT SMITH III: That was the longest walk to a microphone in my life. That was a joke, but hey, there we go. Thank you. Good afternoon, to the districting commission and to the public participating in this very glamorous moment of democracy. My name is Robert, I'm a resident of Bedford- Stuyvesant, and I'm the president of my block association and a member of Brooklyn Community Board 3.

I'm here today, to ask each of you to keep the deeply interconnected and historically Black neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights intact, as the 36th District. Even though I live north of Atlantic Avenue on Macon Street, I count Northern Crown Heights as part of my community.

We share schools, hospitals, culturally specific arts organizations, subway stations, bus routes, churches, demographics, historic architecture. And importantly, unique relationships to

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pressing political questions, like, public safety, gentrification, sanitation, and I can go on and on.

And I want to echo, you know, what Paul Spring was saying on Zoom, about how the city council District 36, aligns with the assembly District 56. And I think this alignment allows for, you know, historical Black residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights to have a important share of political power.

And I think within our national context, you know, being dead set on diluting Black electoral power, it's really important that this comission, you know, makes the right decision to draw maps that keeps District 36 intact or as similar as possible. And allow our well-organized and historic Black community to represent and govern itself for the next 10 years and beyond. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Carlos

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Castellano.

CARLOS CASTELLANO: Hello everyone. My name is Carlos Castellano, and I was born and raised in Washington Heights, and currently reside in Inwood, in District 10.

I'm here to testify regarding the growth of Council District 7 and 10 in Upper Manhattan. I urge the commission to take steps that ensure districts in Upper Manhattan are compact, but they are not oddly shaped. That communities of interest are served, and that Black and Latino populations are adequately represented on the city council.

To achieve these goals, the commission should include the Polo Grounds as part of the District 10, and ensure that the 160s and the 150s remain part of District 7. If District 10 is to grow, the Polo Grounds is the most natural direction to -- I'm sorry, natural direction for the district to expand.

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2 The Polo Ground is already connected
3 to District 10 via the FDR Highway, all
4 the way up to Dykers Street. The
5 highway extends down both sides of the
6 district, connecting Dyckman Housing to
7 the Polo Grounds, and forming a
8 community of interest. The current
9 northeast part of the District 10,
10 already connects to the FDR Highway,
11 which directly connects to the
12 Polo Grounds, as well. Coogan's Bluff,
13 which is currently part of District 10,
14 should serve residents on either side,
15 including those currently in District
16 10, and the people who reside in the
17 Polo Grounds Towers.

18 The people living on each side of
19 Coogan's Bluff, are equally invested in
20 selecting the council member who will be
21 responsible for this major green space.
22 Polo Grounds, and the remaining area of
23 Washington Heights, already share
24 representation. For instance, assembly
25 District 71, currently included the Polo

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Grounds and east of Amsterdam, south of 159th Street.

District 10, is already east of Amsterdam, including Amsterdam, St. Nicholas and Edgecombe. I simply ask that the district continues south along these lines.

Finally, the 160s and 150s west of Amsterdam, should remain in District 7. Washington Heights had always been represented by at least two council members, and shifting these blocks in the heart of Washington Heights, would functionally cut representation of these communities in half. Programs that have historically received funding from council members representing both districts, would likely see their fundings cut in half.

Even if these needs in poverty in District 10 were to dramatically increase, cutting the 160s and 150s west of Amsterdam, out of District 7, also would dramatically increase the

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proportion of white voters, and reduce the voting power of the substantial Black and Latino population.

It will move the Community Health Academy of the Washington -- of the Heights, to District 10. Meaning that, no high school would operate in District 7, and that all funding for high school programs, would likely need to come from the District 10 budget.

District 10, already has two high schools. One is George Washington High School Educational Campus. Which I was the last graduating class of George Washington High School, and worked in Summer Youth, Gregorio Luperon, back when I was a teenager. Both of which are in great need of additional support and resources.

District 10 is not equipped to provide full attention and resources to a third high school. The 160s cannot be separated from the 150s west of Amsterdam. A number of Hispanic-serving

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institutions operated in the 150s,
including Boricua College and the
Hispanic Society Museum.

And these institutions are likely to
thrive, if they are represented by a
council member elected by the people of
southern -- southern Washington
Heights, who have a historic and
cultural connection to these
institutions.

I'll be providing my testimony and
the map outline to everyone. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Let's head
to a neighbor on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Ekram
Alrowmeim.

ANNOUNCER: I'm sorry, could you
repeat that again? We couldn't hear you
well.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Ekram
Alrowmeim.

EKRAM ALROWMEIM: Good afternoon,
everyone. Can you hear me?

ANNOUNCER: Yes, we can. Thank you.

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EKRAM ALROWMEIM: My name is Ekram Alrowmeim, a community health partner at the Academy of Medical and Public Health Services, and is a non-profit healthcare organization in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, working to make healthcare more accessible to marginalized immigrant communities and people of color.

So we provide free clinical screenings, bilingual mental health therapy, individualized health education and social services, primarily, with the Chinese, Latino, and Arab communities of Brooklyn in New York, in Sunset Park, and Bensonhurst. We are also a member of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force.

The APA community in Bensonhurst, is a community of interest and should be kept as whole as possible. It currently is divided into four city council districts, and in none of these four districts, is a APA community has a significant plurality. This is despite

1
2 the fact that between 2010 and 2020, the
3 APA population of New York City
4 increased by about 345,000 residents.

5 About a third of this increase was
6 in Brooklyn, and between 2010 and 2020,
7 the APA population in Brooklyn increased
8 53 percent. To keep the Bensonhurst
9 community of interest as whole as
10 possible, we believe a district can be
11 created that would result in a
12 near-majority APA city council district,
13 that contains just parts of Bensonhurst.

14 While the APA community in Sunset
15 Park and Bensonhurst may have -- have
16 many shared interest, it's too large to
17 put both neighborhoods in one single
18 district. The APA community in Sunset
19 Park, in current -- currently hold in
20 Council District 38 and should remain
21 whole as possible in a single district.
22 The APA community interracial -- the APA
23 community is a racial minority protected
24 under the Voting Rights Act and
25 protecting racial and language

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minorities is a high priority of the city charter.

Dividing communities with common interest will only tear our communities farther apart, and will just continue to marginalize an already marginalized communities.

Dividing Bensonhurst into four city council Districts, means limited resources. It means over-populated schools, lack of language access, and increased homeless -- homelessness rates. It means rising food insecurity and unemployment. It means lack of affordable housing and increased violence and crime rates. More divisions, means being unfairly ignored.

Therefore, I urge the New York City districting commission to keep the APA community of interest in Bensonhurst as whole as possible, and the APA community of interest in Sunset Park, as whole as possible.

Third districts are the foundation

1
2 for fair political and social
3 representation. The right decision must
4 be taken. If not, our communities will
5 live with the results for this next --
6 the results for the next decade. But
7 fair redistricting will allow our
8 communities to fight for their fair
9 share of funding for community-based
10 services, language access, better public
11 safety and more.

12 Thank you for your time. We hope
13 truly, you consider the interest of the
14 different communities who will be
15 impacted. Please keep us together and
16 not divided. Thank you so much.

17 ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Benjamin
18 Rosenfield.

19 BENJAMIN ROSENFELD: Good
20 afternoon, my name is Benjamin
21 Rosenfield. I'm a resident of the
22 Manhattan Valley area of the Upper West
23 Side, and I'm here to testify regarding
24 the expansion of District 7.

25 Specifically, I would urge the

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Comission to increase the size of District 7, by expanding west of Broadway and south of 109th Street. All of us are reliant on the same transportation infrastructure, namely the 1 train, and the same exit off the West Side Highway to get home in the evenings. We face the same sanitation issues, which is why we are working together to clean up Broadway Mall, and to fight for more composting in the area. We are also working together for a park to park open street, across 103rd Street.

Increasing the size of District 7, by expanding west of Broadway and south of 109th Street, would create greater continuity for the Jewish community, of which I'm a proud member. I worship at the Anshe Chesed synagogue on 109th Street and West End Avenue, alongside many of my neighbors in District 6 and District 7.

Expanding the district in this

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manner, would allow many Jews, like myself, who live in the area to have our homes and places of worship, as well as, community centers, covered in a singular city council district. There's no existing benefit from communities west of Broadway and east of Broadway in the 100s, having separate representation.

We each have the same distinct needs from city government. We frequent the same businesses, eat at the same restaurants, and are impacted by the same developments, and advocate for and against policies that affect us in identical ways.

There are a few additional specific recommendations I urge the board to keep in mind. First, the Towers on the complex on 110th Street, should be wholly contained in District 7, rather than having the north building as part of District 9 and the south building as part of a District 7.

Second, I wish that the Park West

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Village remains specifically a part of District 7. This economically diverse complex, is home to many engaged voters, including many members of the minority communities and elderly, whose voices would be diluted if they were moved into another district.

Third, the commercial corridor on -- between 196th Street along Columbus Avenue, runs through Park West Village in District 7, and equally serves and employs the people of the District 6 in District 7.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the district committee for their time, and would like to commend you for the work that you're doing in service of our city and our democracy.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Let's head to a neighbor on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Lurie Danielle Flower -- Favors -- Favors.

ANNOUNCER: Lurie Daniel Favors.

LURIE DANIEL FAVORS: Good

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afternoon. Good afternoon
commissioners. My name is Lurie
Danielle Favors, and I'd like to thank
you for the opportunity to testify
today.

I am here on behalf of the Center
for Law and Social Justice at the Medgar
Evers College. My family home is in
Bedford-Stuyvesant District 36, where my
father spent the first half of his life.
My mother lives there to this day, and I
work in the beautiful District of 35, in
Crown Heights Brooklyn.

CLSJ, is a racial justice law center
that envisions a civically educated and
engaged political electorate, that is
consistently building political power to
marshal the representation and resources
needed for our communities to thrive.

Prior to this hearing, CLSJ
submitted a city-wide map that outlines
our 13 districts that comprise a
significant and performing communities
of interest of people of African

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descent. In addition to those 13 districts, we also submitted a map outlining our additional 10 communities of interest that are located outside of those districts and which should be maintained regardless of whatever district that they are drawn into.

People of African descent, the population of African descent in Brooklyn, increased over the past decade. And as Brooklyn consistently boast the largest population of diverse communities of African descent in the city, that overall growth accounted for nearly 40 percent of the Black population increase in our city neighborhoods, like in central Brooklyn, like Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, East New York, Brownsville, Prospect Heights, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Flatbush, East Flatbush, and more recently, Canarsie Flatlands, collectively have the largest and most concentrated Black populations in all of

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North America.

And the communities of interest in these areas, saw exponential growth through influxes of people of African descent from the South, Caribbean, Africa, and of course, Spanish-speaking people of African descent, from Latin America and South America, while others relocated from other New York neighborhoods to be closer to their respective communities of interest.

For those reasons, we urge you to maintain adherence to the redistricting criteria, as noted by my colleague, Dr. Blair. We do not draw maps on single district basis, we look at the city as a whole. And for example, while council district's 35 and 36 have much in common, including the fact that they both struggle with population loss due to lack of affordable housing and gentrification, they are in fact, made up of two different communities of interest, and that should be respected,

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preserved.

We also advocate, that you strive to keep the shoreline communities together and not allow them to be divided. Communities like those in Coney Island, Manhattan Beach, and Brighton Beach, those communities should be maintained as communities of interest, as they all face similar challenges that transcend their respective populations.

And it is important that communities like Coney Island are not isolated away from other shore-based communities of interest, as a way of ensuring that their short-term and long-term needs can be met.

Additionally, we urge that the Sheepshead Bay Housing be maintained in District 46, because that too, is a community of interest that should be kept as a whole.

I will be submitting my full written testimony, along with a copy of the Center for Law and Social Justice,

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people of African descent in New York City report, currently available on our website. And I refer you again, to our previously submitted district maps and the communities of interest maps for additional details.

I would also note that the Center for Law and Social Justice is a member of the Unity Map Coalition, which is comprised of our organization, the Asian-American Legal Defense Fund and Latino Justice PRLDEF. And we also -- we are working to also submit maps for your consideration which demonstrate an equitable distribution of power, based on census data and our data-driven understanding of the geo-placement of our communities of interest. And we look forward to engaging with the commission further. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Benny Chen.

BENNY CHEN: My name is Benny Chen, and since birth, to just about a year ago, I lived in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a

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neighborhood community -- a neighboring
community -- community from Bensonhurst.
I am 28 years old -- 28 years old now,
and I live in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

Still a short distance from Bensonhurst.

Bensonhurst, like Sunset Park, has a
rooted and growing population of Chinese
Americans. In 2020, I helped APA voice
and efforts to get residents of
Bensonhurst to complete the 2020 census.
We did so by walking the streets of
Bensonhurst, making stops to engage with
local businesses, and even residents on
the street. We walked from the area of
the J-mart supermarket of Utrecht
Avenue, to where the elevated subway
trains taper off at Stillwell Avenue and
86th Street.

We did this in multiple days, in
order to cover as much ground as we
could. Each day that we walked, it was
evident that there existed a strong
Chinese-American community. The
residents communicated with one another

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in Chinese. I could make out Gan, Cantonese, Mandarin, Fujianese, Formosan Taiwanese. The local bakeries, restaurants, businesses, had their names displayed above their doors in both English and Chinese, sometimes only in Chinese.

A bulk of the members of Bensonhurst are Chinese American. Unlike the Asian-American community in Sunset Park, which has kept whole in District 38, Bensonhurst is divided into four city council districts. If the geographical districting of the community continues to be split into four different districts, the voices of Asian-American residents will continue to be diluted.

I ask that the district maps be drawn so that those with common interest, who live in the same neighborhood, be kept to the same district to the best extent possible. I feel that this is something very reasonable to ask for. I encourage you

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to walk the streets of Bensonhurst, so that you can see for yourselves what I had saw. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Who do have next up on Zoom?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Deborah Young.

ANNOUNCER: Deborah Young.

DEBORAH YOUNG: Yes, I'm here on Zoom. My name is Deborah Young, and I live in the 35th District. I am also the president and co-founder of the Crown Heights North Association, and I also serve as the second vice chair of the Community Board 8.

I want to thank Chair Walcott and the commission for this opportunity. And Chair Walcott, you may not know me as Deborah Young, and I'm not going to date us, but we did our undergraduate or internship together, and you knew me as Debbie Cuffy, at that time, so it's good seeing you.

I submitted a testimony that's a

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little lengthy, so I'm just going to take the key points and share at this point.

Currently, the Crown Heights North community is split between the 35 and 36th council districts. Clearly, this fragmentation impacts the residents of our community. We are fortunate to have two council members who are hard-working, conscientious, engaged and fully committed to working together for their constituents and the common good.

Nonetheless, the schism, however, impacts our ability to be represented as a complete. For example, on any given street, one side can be represented by the 35th, while the neighbors across the street, are represented by the 36th. While our goals may be similar or even the same, this arbitrary division forces us to work with two officers, two staff, two representatives, in any endeavor, making just about everything, much more complicated and time consuming than it

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needs to be for both our representatives and the community.

We need to be joined as one, to foster our cultural, religious and other related commonalities. Ideally, it is in Crown Heights North's community's best interest, to be in one council district, making us whole.

And it's hard to testify, because we've been successful, and we work very well with both representatives in the 35th and 36th, but we think it's equally as important that we be made whole. So we urge the commission to ensure that streets are not divided down the middle, and that the boundaries of our district, maintain the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

As state and congressional boundaries split neighborhoods and have resulted in my district having four members of congress, whereas it previously had two, it is imperative that we ensure council districts truly

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include interior -- entire neighborhoods and communities.

I thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIR WALCOTT: If I may, for one second to say, while I won't date the year, if I remember correctly, Columbia School of Social Work, so I do remember, but I will not say the year, not for my benefit, but for mutual benefit. So thank you, good seeing you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Cesar Ruiz.

CESAR RUIZ: Good evening commissioners of the New York City redistricting commission, and thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify.

My name is Cesar Ruiz. I'm an attorney and legal fellow at Latino Justice. Latino Justice, is a Latino civil rights organization that fights for equitable treatment of Latinos under the law. We have actively participated in New York City's redistricting process over the past several decades, and we

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are proud to join our partners of the Unity Coalition Project, AALDEF Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Center for Law and Justice at Medgar Evers College, in that effort once again, and we hope to have maps for you soon.

I want to start by highlighting the immense growth of the New York City's Latinx community. Over the past 10 years, according to recent U.S. census -- census bureau data, Latinos comprise 28.3 percent of the city's total population and have added over 150,00 residents. Particularly in Brooklyn, we've added over 20,000 residents with a growth rate of 4.1 percent over the past 10 years. Plainly, this expansion warrants a configuration of city council districts that accurately reflect that growth.

Now, shifting to mapping suggestions, I think the first point is just reflecting on some of the changes,

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and particularly the impact of
gentrification, which has shifted
traditional Latinx populations
throughout Brooklyn. It's no secret
that there has been unprecedented
historical development of these areas,
particularly in William's --
Williamsburg and Bushwick. Which has
disproportionately placed -- displaced
many Latinx residents, given the lack of
affordable housing.

So recognizing this impact, it's
important that we follow these trends
which shows the Latinx community has
shifted into neighboring areas,
including Ridgewood, Cypress Hills and
Woodhaven. Future districts have to
reflect this reality and endeavor to
connect these communities to ensure that
their vote isn't diluted.

Recognizing the demographic trends
and shifts that I had mention
previously, we want to highlight that's
important that we continue the crossing

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2 between Brooklyn and Queens as currently
3 configured in District 34. This
4 connects the communities of
5 Williamsburg, Bushwick and Ridgewood.
6 Their combination has enabled them to
7 consistently elect candidates of their
8 choice, which protects their interest
9 adequately, represents their shared
10 cultural, economic, and social interest.

11 Additionally, we're also suggesting
12 that any future configurations of
13 existing District 38, be kept compact,
14 centering Sunset Park and Red Hook as it
15 currently does. These neighborhoods
16 share a rich history of social activism,
17 and share a -- any cultural and economic
18 interests warranting -- warranting a
19 continued pairing.

20 Lastly, we turn to Hope Gardens,
21 which is a Latinx community of interest
22 that is currently split between existing
23 districts 34 and 37. To remedy the
24 issue of the split, we're suggesting
25 that you bring the remaining part of

1
2 Hope Gardens left out of existing 37,
3 into the district, as opposed to having
4 it split. And to guide that boundary,
5 and to effectively make that change,
6 we're suggesting a shift of the southern
7 boundary to Broadway, which would
8 capture the entirety of Hope Gardens
9 community of interest within existing
10 District 37.

11 Lastly, I just wanted to highlight,
12 that the commission is subject to the
13 newly passed John Lewis -- John R. Lewis
14 New York Voting Rights Act. In the
15 spirit of the John R. Lewis, the law was
16 enacted to ensure that there was
17 unfettered access to the ballot,
18 including the redistricting process,
19 which has historically had the effect of
20 diluting the vote of racial ethnic and
21 language minority community members.

22 Simply put, the commission is bound
23 by the New York State law to ensure that
24 the resulting district lines do not
25 diminish the ability of Latinx, Black,

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and Asian communities to elect candidates of their choice.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to submitting maps in the future. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next up on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Jerry Vattamala.

ANNOUNCER: Jerry Vattamala.

JERRY VATTAMALA: Hi, good evening. My name is Jerry Vattamala. I'm the Director of the Democracy Program at the Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, ALDEF. We are a national organization headquartered in New York, we were founded in 1974.

Our mission is to protect the civil rights of the Asian-Americans, and we've been involved in redistricting since the 1980 redistricting cycle.

ALDEF is a member of the Unity Map Coalition, along with Latino Justice, as

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well as the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College. We are also a founding member of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force.

I do want to highlight to the commission, that we have already submitted our 16 Asian-American communities of interest boundary lines. So we submitted that -- that list to you with links to our community of interest maps. There are sixteen of them, with input from our partners at APA VOICE, and other organizations that give you the street boundaries and that was asked earlier by Commissioner Gold, that gives you the north, south, east, west boundaries of all of our communities of interest.

And as I had testified earlier, what we're asking you to do, is try and keep those communities of interest full to the extent possible. And any map that's being considered, to please superimpose those sixteen Asian-American communities

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of interest to get a sense of the community is being kept whole or not. When you do that with the current lines, you'll see that in Brooklyn, our community of interest of Bensonhurst, is divided into four different city council districts, which is really not acceptable.

In Queens, Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, is divided among three different districts. We're hoping with this commission, we can remedy those problems as mentioned by colleagues, we are working on a Unity Map for city councils. It will be a full 51 District map, that we believe is the most fair and equitable for the communities of color protected under the Federal Voting Rights Act. And it complies with the charter and other federal and local requirements.

As mentioned earlier by some of my colleagues, the Asian community was the fastest-growing racial group in the

1
2 city. In Brooklyn, in particular, the
3 growth was 43 percent -- 43 percent
4 growth, the highest rate in the borough.
5 In Queens, it was 29 percent, and in
6 Manhattan, 24 percent. So these new
7 lines should reflect that growth. They
8 should reflect that growth of the
9 Asian-American community in their
10 respective boroughs. In particular, in
11 Brooklyn where we're hoping to that
12 change with Bensonhurst being kept
13 completely within one city council
14 district.

15 We know it's possible and that it
16 would result in an almost majority
17 Asian-American district in city council.
18 Asian-Americans, as I mentioned, are a
19 protected group under the Federal Voting
20 Rights Act, and the Charter specifically
21 mentions, it has, as you all know, this
22 prioritized list. First their
23 population equality, and the second item
24 on this prioritized list, is that there
25 must be fair and effective

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representation for language and racial minorities protected under the Federal Voting Rights Act. That includes the Black, Latino and Asian community in New York City.

That must be considered before looking at other communities of interest. And we know there are other communities of interest that don't fall into that category, that are not protected by the Federal Voting Rights Act, and that includes religious groups, you know, waterfront communities, you name it. There's a lot of other communities of interest in Brooklyn we know, and the rest of the City.

But those can only be considered after ensuring there is fair and effective representation for language and racial minorities protected under the Federal Voting Rights Act. So we're expecting adherence to the city council prioritized, the city charter prioritized list for this redistricting

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process.

I should also mention, that there are performing -- performing districts for these protected groups. These are districts that are electing candidates of their choice in their respective districts. Those districts should not be retrogressed or dismantled in any way to make it harder for these communities to continue to elect candidates of their choice. They currently do have fair and effective representation in these performing majority or plurality districts.

And just to give you examples, I gave you some in Queens' Districts 20, 23, 25, 26, who it's not a coincidence that many of these districts keep our communities of interest almost entirely whole, that's why they're performing. So those should not be dismantled or retrogressed in the new plan.

We look forward to working with you on this and submitting a Unity Map for

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your consideration. But as I mentioned, you do have our sixteen Asian-American communities of interest that we hope you will use and superimpose over any plan, including our plan, which we'll submit to you to analyze whether these communities have been kept whole or not. And we're hoping that they are kept whole in compliance with the Charter and the Federal Voting Rights Act.

Thank you very much.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Council member Ari Kagan.

ARI KAGAN: Okay. Good evening, I'm council member Ari Kagan. I represent the 47th Councilmanic District, in Southern Brooklyn. Currently includes beautiful neighborhoods of Sea Gate, Coney Island, Warbasse, Beach Haven, Gravesend, Bensonhurst and Brighten Beach.

I would like to say that before the last redistricting, 47th District looked different because, for example, Warbasse

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2 Houses, is high-risers, and they're
3 absolutely neighboring to from Village
4 Luna Park, Bright Water Towers. And
5 also, I would like to emphasize that
6 previously 47th District was inside, and
7 is currently inside this district in
8 46th Assembly District, in the community
9 border team, in the same congressional
10 district, in the same senatorial
11 district.

12 So it's absolutely logical to have
13 similar communities, similar even size
14 of the buildings as 20 floors, and
15 similar issues. It's all waterfront
16 communities and Chair of Waterfronts and
17 Resiliency Committee, they should be in
18 the same council -- council district,
19 number 47.

20 Right now, like our neighbors from
21 Warbasse, they're saying why across the
22 street, we have residents in a different
23 Councilmanic District, constantly in our
24 office our office is located on
25 445 Manhattan Avenue. We're getting

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phone calls and request and people coming in from Luna Park, Brightwater Towers and from Brighton Beach. I'm not talking about the entire Brighton Beach, I'm talking about half of Brighton Beach all the way to Coney Island Avenue.

It will be fair to Russian-Americans to Muslim-Americans, to be in the same district. It will be fair to the residents of these high-risers. It makes total sense, even, if you're talking about contentious district. Right now, my district looks like a headless body with one hand like this, you know doesn't make any sense. So this head should be another district, you know. It's not contagious, you know.

So, and again, it was the way I'm talking about it, was before last redistricting and before 2012. And I think it should stay this way, like it was before last redistricting.

And I know many communities in my

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district feel the same way. I was once at the hearings with several Chinese-American groups. They are saying, they don't want to be split in four council districts.

I talked to many leaders of the Pakistani-American community, and to many leaders of the Russian-speaking American community, Italian-American community, everybody is saying the same, that it will benefit all communities in the 47th District, to keep -- to come back to the lines that were in effect before last redistricting.

I hope you will consider it and we'll change, will make this change. Thank you so very much. Thank you for your great work.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Zoom, please.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Elizabeth OuYang.

ANNOUNCER: Elizabeth OuYang.

ELIZABETH OUYANG: Hi, I apologize

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first, for my attire. I don't know if you can see it, but it has -- has "I am a volleyball aunt". I am in, like, Commissioner Walcott, family called, and I'm at my nephew's national tournament volleyball tournament in Orlando, Florida. It was very important that I be here. I've missed all his games because of COVID, and he understands that I am missing his game now.

I caught his first game as a nail-biting tie breaker. He lost, but he knows that I can't be there watching him now. There's 2,000 people below me in this sports center. Because this is important, he understands.

I am the Coordinator of APA VOICE Redistricting Task Force, And as Jerry Vattamala said, just before me, from ALDEF, we, our coalition of 21 groups, contributed to the neighborhood community of interest maps that they have already been submitted to the commission.

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2 Three of those communities of
3 interests is in Brooklyn, Sheepshead
4 Bay, Sunset Park and Bensonhurst.
5 Sheepshead Bay and Sunset Park are
6 largely kept whole in one single
7 district. But Bensonhurst, as you
8 heard, is divided into four different
9 districts. And this is critical, not
10 only because it dilutes Asian-American
11 power and communities of interest that
12 has so many things in common, but it
13 also prevents Asian-Americans from
14 participating in civic engagement,
15 because it dilutes our community.

16 And not only are APAs not willing to
17 run for office, but it impacts our
18 community's ability to vote. And if
19 that -- their vote will make a
20 difference.

21 And it's important as well, because
22 given, as you heard, over and over
23 again, the undisputed fact of the growth
24 of the APA community in Brooklyn. That
25 not one of these four districts is a

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majority APA city council district or even a near majority APA city council district. We believe it is possible to keep Bensonhurst as whole as possible, by creating a near-majority APA district.

This is long overdue, and I hope the commission will address this. It is the neighborhood that is divided the most in APA communities of interest.

Bensonhurst, and in response to Commissioner Gold's questions, as Jerry said, the maps and the boundaries have been submitted, but just in general, we're talking about the communities of interest in Bensonhurst, that from the West 14th Avenue to the North 55th Street, then on the East McDonald Avenue, to South Shore Parkway on this --

And so I hope that you listen to not only Jerry's testimony, but also the testimonies of UMC that testified earlier, Stephanie Wong. Ekram, who

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testified from Academy of Medical Public Health Services. UCAB is about to testify, the largest social service organization in Brooklyn for Asian-Americans as well as in the city. As well as the individuals who testified in support of keeping our communities of interest as whole as possible.

Thank you very much.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Kevin Corte.

KEVIN CORTE: Good evening, commissioners. I'll keep this extremely brief, since you've literally just heard this.

I am a member of Community Board 7 in Manhattan, and I'd like to talk about community District 7 and community District 10 in Manhattan, both of which have lost population.

Just three points I agree and concur with, I think the comments you've already heard. We'd love to see the district expanded to the west of 96th Street, to include both sides of

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Broadway. Our main street, as you would imagine, is Broadway, and it's currently split between two different districts, and that's not an ideal situation. It makes the forming of business administrations a little more difficult.

We have some initiatives, like the 103 park to park initiative, which is to create an open street that spans from Riverside Park to Central Park. That's made more difficult by the fact that covers two different council districts.

And generally, north of 96th is Bloomingdale's, it's Manhattan Valley, and it's very much a cohesive unit, has a large Hispanic population, of which I'm a member. And the unity between that district and the streets to the north of 125th, all the way up to Washington Heights, is a lot stronger than it would be otherwise.

Last, I'll just conclude with District 10, which has lost a lot of population. I formally lied in

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District 10. There's a little sliver at the bottom, which is Coogan's Bluff, it's part of the Highbridge Park. One side is in one district and the other, who's residents of the Polo Grounds complex are completely cut off between that cliff and the FDR Highway, that part should be -- make a lot more sense as being part of Manhattan Community Board District 10.

We'll submit written testimony on behalf of Community Board 7. So, I'll let you read more there. Thanks for your time.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next up on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Ashley Chen.

ANNOUNCER: Ashley Chen.

ASHLEY CHEN: Good evening, commissioners. My name is Ashley Chen, and I'm a Policy Fellow with the Chinese-American Planning Council, CPC.

The mission of CPC is to promote the

1
2 social and economic empowerment of
3 Chinese-American immigrant and
4 low-income communities. CPC is a proud
5 member of APA VOICE Redistricting Task
6 Force. CPC is the largest AAPI social
7 service organization in the U.S.,
8 providing vital resources to more than
9 125,000 people per year in all 51
10 council districts.

11 CPC has more than 50 programs at
12 over 30 sites, primarily across the
13 Lower East Side, and Chinatown, and
14 Manhattan, Sunset Park in Brooklyn, and
15 Flushing, Queens. CPC employs over 700
16 staff, whose comprehensive services are
17 linguistically accessible and culturally
18 sensitive. CPC directly serves the APA
19 communities in Brooklyn, including
20 Bensonhurst from our Community Center
21 Incentive Park, which provides services
22 in English, Mandarin, Cantonese,
23 Fujianese and Taiwanese.

24 Their services include childhood
25 education, nutrition, mental health,

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senior services, career services, immigration legal help and more, to 24,000 community members.

As you learned from the recent 2020 census data, AAPI communities are the fastest growing racial group in the city. There has been an incredible 210 percent increase in the Asian population in Brooklyn, over the last 10 years, and the APA community in Bensonhurst's communities of interest, with a shared need for culturally responsive services.

It has the largest population of residents born in China and Hong Kong out of any neighborhood in New York City, and has been coined as Brooklyn's second Chinatown after Sunset Park. The AP community in Sunset Park is currently whole in city council District 38, and should remain so.

However, the APA community in Bensonhurst is currently divided into four city council districts, with APs

1
2 ranging from 17 percent to 30 percent in
3 districts 44, 47, 43 and 38,
4 respectively. Bensonhurst needs to be
5 kept as whole as possible. While
6 Bensonhurst might be too big to be in
7 one city council district, there's a way
8 to keep Bensonhurst as whole as
9 possible, that can result in at least
10 one near-majority APA city council
11 district.

12 From a service provider perspective,
13 it is important to keep the community as
14 whole as possible, because it ensures
15 more voting power for our communities to
16 elect a candidate of their choice. It
17 is critical that we elect candidates
18 that respond meaningfully to the needs
19 and demands of our communities.

20 Furthermore, we have continued to
21 see the disproportionate distribution of
22 public funding community-based
23 organizations serving AAPI communities,
24 despite the rapidly growing population.
25 More specifically, the Coalition for

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Asian-American Children and Families, reported that organizations serving the Asian-American Pacific Islander community, received 4.37 percent of city council discretionary dollars, and less than 1.5 percent of social service contract dollars.

In the midst of a healthcare crisis, we need to ensure that our communities are heavily invested, which is precisely why the redistricting process needs to be as fair and as transparent as possible.

In order to prevent the dilution of APA community power and representation, we urge the commission to keep communities of interest intact. Unfair redistricting will divide rapidly growing communities, minimize their concerns and deprive them of effective representation for years to come.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next up on Zoom.

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ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Tyron Allen.

ANNOUNCER: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Tyron Allen.

ANNOUNCER: Tyron Allen.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Let's try Jack Plushnick.

ANNOUNCER: Jack Plushnick.

JACK PLUSHNICK: Yes, thank you. Im sorry, I'm in the middle -- there we go, there we go.

Good evening, thank you. I wanted to thank the commissioners, and I wanted to thank the redistricting -- the redistricting commission on reviewing and listening to our testimonies regarding the redistricting of city council districts here in Brooklyn and throughout the City.

I am a member, or I used to be a member, of the city council -- not a staff with the city council. I was formally, for seven years, working in

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the 48th council district. I also did constituent services there. I also am a vice president and former president of a non-profit in the district as well, and I have a long history in the district.

It's for that reason, that I think it's incredibly important that when redistricting -- when redistricting consideration is taken into account for the 48 council district, that it's -- that the redistricting commission considers including the original lines that existed in the district prior to 2013, before the previous redistricting.

It used to be that the district went up to Avenue I, the 48th council district, by the way, is the district that I'm talking about. The 48th council district used to go up to Avenue I, comprising of the larger Orthodox Jewish community. I happened to be, as I mentioned before, a vice president, former President of a Jewish organization, a synagogue in the

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district.

Currently, the district is split. The Orthodox community in the district, is split in half between the 45th and the 48 city council district. I think it's incredibly important and imperative that we -- we reintroduce and we include the Orthodox community so they can be properly represented, and that way they have a voice in the council more than they were able to before, due to the split that happened in 2013.

Additionally, with regard to the Sheepshead Bay and Ocean Housing Project that is right outside the district, previously, those projects were -- those NYCHA projects were included in the district prior to 2013. Those -- those residents that live in those buildings, regularly use the transit hubs that are in the 48th council district.

Those are transit hubs that are used by people both in the 48th and in the neighboring 46th city council district,

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which is where the Sheepshead Bay
Nostrand Housing is currently.

Without the Sheepshead Bay Nostrand
Housing projects being included in the
48th District, the residents of those --
of those housing projects, aren't able
to effectively have a member who can
advocate for them when it comes to those
vital transit hubs on Nostrand Avenue,
one of the most vital transit hubs for
those projects, the -- there -- it's the
largest transit hub in that district --
for those projects currently.

So it's for that reason, that I
think that it's incredibly important
that those -- that the Sheepshead Bay
Nostrand Housing get re-included into
the 48th council district as well.

With that being said, I also feel
that Coney Island is currently included
in the district, should no longer be
included in the district. The Coney
Island section of the district is
splitting off from the -- I'm sorry,

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from the Coney Island section, the Coney Island district, which represents all Coney Island. So I think, that the Coney Island district should be taken out of the district as well.

With that, I just wanted to thank you again, the commission, and thank you for the time to allow me to give my testimony regarding the 40th council district.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next on Zoom?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Eli Cohen.

ANNOUNCER: Eli Cohen.

ELI COHEN: Thank you, just want to put my video on. I'm technically challenged. I'm a graduate from Medgar Evers, and very proud of your people from that great institution. Just attended a graduation there last week.

Crown Heights Jewish Community council, which -- of which I'm the executive director, is a representative organization of the over 70 Jewish

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congregations of the Crown Heights neighborhood and surrounding areas in Central Brooklyn. I submit this testimony on behalf of the community of common interest that historic -- has historically seen it's voice diminished by being split into three or four separate city council districts.

We are proposing a map, of not an entire district, but of a section that should be kept together within one council district. The section is from Rogers Avenue on the west, to the Rochester -- Rochester Avenue and the park on the east, and from Sterling Place on the north side, down to Clarkson Avenue in the south, with a little corner down Remsem Avenue also.

So that map, will -- which we'll submit as part of this testimony, shows all those 70 synagogues mapped out. And about a dozen schools and all pretty much, all the Jewish residents of that area, in that square. And all the

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children who live in that square, all attend school and synagogue within that square.

So, it's a very compact and clear boundary that had -- the 90,000 residents that are there. So it's not a full council district, 90,000 residents. We would have about 6,000 households comprising about 23,000 individuals, so they would not be more than 17 percent of that square. And of a total council district, not more than about 10 percent.

So, this -- well, the point of raising these numbers, is that it will be possible to keep this district of interest, this community of interest together, without compromising issues of voting rights issues with regard to not looking at a minority of any -- of a majority of anything districting. We're talking about a distinct minority within a larger district, which is mostly African-American and Caribbean-American

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residents.

So, and interestingly enough, our organization has been involved in a lot of communal work with our African-American and Caribbean-American partners. So that's a very -- a very homogenous and very well-defined district that includes most of Community Board 8 and Community Board 9, north and south of Eastern Parkway.

To describe -- I just want to describe for a minute, how this really is a -- a communities of interest. The vast majority of the Jewish residents, white, non-Hispanic residents of this area, are affiliated in some form or other, with the Kabbalah movement. So, it's one religious movement, centered at the main synagogue, which is 770 Eastern Parkway, right in the center.

And we've had as many as 15,000 people from this area gather in one place, at one event, several times on the property over the course of last

1
2 year. So, it's really, really tight.
3 The High Holy Days, the entire community
4 comes to the main synagogue, to the
5 ceremony of casting the sins into the
6 waters, a little fountain over there,
7 where they worship. Year round, they
8 meet for prayers in the smaller
9 congregations that, again, all within
10 this area, and at storefronts, and
11 private homes in the area where this
12 group gathers.

13 And 5,000 school-age children who
14 live in this area, mostly attend these
15 12 religious-based schools in this area.
16 So, it's a very tight area, which right
17 now, is split into three districts
18 between, 35, 40 and 41. So, it's really
19 -- right now we're being divided into
20 three districts with a line right at the
21 center of the district of these -- where
22 these three districts come together and
23 that -- and --

24 The only priority that goes more
25 than, according to the Charter, the only

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priority greater than keeping communities of interest together, is voting rights. And I think since it's a relatively small group, it can be kept together and still not impinge on any voting rights issues, and therefore, I submit a -- the testimony.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Excuse me. Is there anyone in person who did not get a chance to sign in, who wanted to testify? I just want to check before I continue on with the Zoom.

No takers.

Okay, we'll continue on with our neighbors on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Thomas Gilroy.

ANNOUNCER: Thomas Gilroy.

THOMAS GILROY: Yes, hello. Hi there. My name is Thomas Gilroy. I'm a community activist, who's worked with a variety of organizations across New York City, in a varied -- variety of

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different places in New York City.

And specifically, I'd like to testify today to talk about the 36th District representing Bedford-Stuyvesant and North Crown Heights. I've worked as a community activist and organizer in the area for a while now. And looking at the ways the neighborhood has been affected and changed over the past 10 years, 15 years, I'd just like to testify to the effect that it is just so important to keep the neighborhood of Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant group together.

There -- the incredible amount of history and culture tied in with Brooklyn's black community that is present in both of those neighborhoods, is incredibly valuable. And because of the ways that the neighborhood is changing because of the money coming in, thanks to gentrification and real estate development, the integrity of the communities, of the black communities,

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are more and more at threat every day.

And right now, a group together in District 36, it's a very tight cohesive area. It has a great degree of overlap with assembly District 50 -- assembly District 56, allowing for communication and collaboration between them. And it essentially allows the people of Bed-Stuy, the people of Crown Heights, to have a strong voice in their governance, at the city level, at the state level. Preserving that, is something that I think needs to be prioritized in redistricting.

As the area becomes more and more fragmented, there is an increasing chance that the neighborhood's Black and Brown communities, are going to find themselves increasingly balkanized into the other districts and cut off from each other. And in doing so, lose their ability to speak up for themselves, to speak up for the rights of the people in the neighborhood.

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And I think that it's important that the territorial integrity or the integrity of the districts, of District 36, be preserved in order to make sure that the people of Bed-Stuy continue to have a strong voice for themselves, and continue to represent themselves, and be heard at the city level.

Yeah, thank you so much, for your time.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next up on Zoom?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We have Sheikh Khalib Rahman.

ANNOUNCER: I'm sorry, can you repeat that one more time?

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Sheikh Galib Rahman.

SHEIKH GALIB RAHMAN: Hello there. I represent District 24 in Jamaica Queens, and I'm here to see what's going today. But I do like to raise a voice for South Asian voters, and we would like to request to have a South Asian

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district around Jamaica and Richmond Hill, because we are the second largest population. And I don't have much details today, but I would like to join the next one and come up with more particular request.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: Alexa Aviles.

ANNOUNCER: Alexa Aviles.

ALEXA AVILES: Hi there. Can you hear me okay?

ANNOUNCER: Yes, we can, thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you so much, Chair Walcott and the commission, for allowing me to testify today. My name is Alexa Aviles. I am the city council member of council District 38, in South Brooklyn. And I will be submitting my testimony in written form, and I'm essentially testifying today for a few critical considerations related to the redistricting process.

New York has learned many lessons

1
2 following the recently concluded state
3 and congressional redistricting
4 processes. And at this juncture, we
5 have time and opportunity to do better.

6 So first, the commission, I would
7 recommend would prioritize keeping
8 districts compact with an eye towards
9 keeping communities of interest
10 together. South Brooklyn communities
11 often face intersectional struggles on
12 key issues, such as the environment,
13 social justice, economic and security
14 language access, all known, too well, in
15 housing stability. Compact districts
16 would allow for stronger representation
17 as communities can collectively leverage
18 their concerns and organize around
19 shared interests. As such, District 38
20 should remain a majority Latino
21 district, largely due to this
22 intersectional struggles faced by this
23 community.

24 Second, I just would love to, for
25 the comission to consider the history of

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2 representation within a particular
3 geography. Our district includes Red
4 Hook and Sunset Park, which has been
5 shared across city, state, and federal
6 levels of government. The commission
7 should take this into account as we
8 consider the redistricting. We are now
9 being presented with an opportunity for
10 communities to coalesce around a set of
11 elected officials that truly represent
12 their interest. And history tells us
13 that gerrymandered districts result in
14 neighbors on the periphery, feeling not
15 only left out, but disenfranchised.

16 And lastly, I would recommend that
17 the commission should keep an eye out
18 for community board cohesion. Many
19 council districts overlap with several
20 community boards and we, in particular,
21 currently overlap with five. As an
22 elected official, our mandate is to
23 serve everyone and while our office
24 is --

25 Is my time up?

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ANNOUNCER: You can have a bit more time.

ALEXA AVILES: Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm almost done. Something weird happened on the screen. Apologies.

So I was just -- I -- I will wrap up by saying, you know, community board cohesion should be a consideration, also in the process.

And I just want to thank the commission for their work. It is my hope that we learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid gerrymandering practices that has resulted in mistrust and disaffection in many of our communities.

Thank you so much for your work, and I will submit my testimony.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Next on Zoom.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: There are no more testifiers on Zoom.

ANNOUNCER: So we will now take a 10-minute break, and we will resume the

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hearing in 10 minutes. Thank you.

(A brief recess was taken.)

JOY CHAUDHARY: Hello, my name is Joy Chaudhary. I'm a community organizer in Woodside, Jackson Heights. I actually ran for office in the past. I see -- I ran for a seat where it's only 20 percent South Asian, therefore, it has been -- it's been -- even though the district was majority immigrant, and I was the only immigrant candidate, I was not able to do good, because of lack of community presence in my district. So, I would like to see a solid South Asian district instead of having any South Asian neighborhood divided into five, six, different districts. I think it will help our community to now help empower ourselves and have a seat at the decision-making table.

Thank you so much.

MR. SADIQUE: So I feel that it should be the districts in -- in the Brighton Beach area, the Coney Island

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Beach and also the Beach Haven should be combined with the 47th District, so that all becomes one, a large territory where we exercise some influence over the electoral process.

It has been a tough battle for our community, because we've noticed that we have been neglected over the years. And, unless we feel a change in the redistricting, we will never be able to have a voice that we can raise and get our issues addressed. We don't have resources coming into our territory at all.

In our neighborhood, none whatsoever. So, we're always struggling, using private funds. And during the pandemic, we used private funds for a very long period of time, to take care of the food needs of the community. And I think that, after a little bit of struggle, we got some help, but we still feel we are not able to raise enough awareness among the

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electoral process, in the electoral
process, so we can have our voices
heard.

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So I feel, the Muslim community in
the Brighten Beach, Beach Haven, Bath
Beach, all of this, should be into one
contiguous area where we can exercise
some influence.

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Thank you.

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ANNOUNCER: Thank you.

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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On this -- on
this brief lull, Mr. Sadique, what would
be very helpful to the commission, if at
some point, you could define the street
boundaries of the Pakistani community,
that would encompass the neighborhoods
that you're concerned about, if you
could. You don't have to do it
literally right this minute.

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MR. SADIQUE: I also submitted a
written testimony, so I think that --

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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that does
have that information?

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MR. SADIQUE: And it doesn't have

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the descriptive, yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, okay. A map helps.

MR. SADIQUE: I didn't have a map. But I can come back and give you a little --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or you don't even have to come back. On this card, there is a e-mail address that you could just upload that information to the commission, and we will follow up with that.

MR. SADIQUE: Excellent, thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

ZOOM ANNOUNCER: We may have some folks on Zoom. Shah Nawaz.

SHAH NAWAZ: I have a request that is to the commission, that is Jackson Heights, Woodside, Elmhurst, there should be a redistricting on South Asian district. Another thing, under this area is a South Asian district.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Brother

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Nawaz, are you still there? Nawaz are you still there?

SHAH NAWAZ: Yes, I am still there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Will you kindly explain what you mean by a South Asian district in those areas; can you elaborate on that?

SHAH NAWAZ: Actually, the Jackson Heights, Woodside, and Elmhurst area, our -- so a lot of South Asian business and South Asians peoples are living there, so we need a district for this area. That is our proposal.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

SHAH NAWAZ: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In College, on July 7th, we'll let Staten Island Borough Hall. Then after we've completed this round, our commissioners have been in all five boroughs and have heard all New Yorkers, and now they have to get to work with the staff here.

In about 30 days, we will be releasing a map, and then you will have

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opportunity for the public to comment on this first map released by the commission, and the city council will have the opportunity also. I noticed some council members were here today also to submit testimony on this very important process and work.

So we thank you for being here this evening. Don't forget that e-mail address, at anytime you could submit any information you want to get to the commissioners.

Have a good evening and safe get home. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: I'd like to thank everyone for their time, those who testified, those who listened and my fellow commissioners.

(Inaudible).

ANNOUNCER: Chairman Walcott, would you like to say a few words.

CHAIR WALCOTT: Oh thank you, very much. I just want to thank all of you and those who testified, as well, and

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look forward to seeing all of you in the Bronx and then in Staten Island next week.

So thank you all for participating, and all to the commissioners as well.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. I think this adjourns our hearing. We will see you next week in the Bronx and Staten Island. Thank you.


(Whereupon, the audio ended.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jeanna Qvistgaard, the assigned transcriber, do hereby certify the foregoing transcript of the proceedings in their entirety, is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings as recorded, and to the best of my ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 6th day of June, 2022.


JEANNA QVISTGAARD

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