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CITY OF NEW YORK
2012-2013
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION
SECOND ROUND PUBLIC MEETING
LaGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
31-10 Thompson Avenue
Long Island City, New York 11101
October 10, 2012
5:45 P.M.

- IN ATTENDANCE:
- FRANK PADAVAN
 - ROXANNE J. PERSAUD
 - THOMAS V. OGNIBENE
 - BENITO ROMANO, Chairman
 - ROBERT W. HART
 - GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE
 - JAMILA PONTON BRAGG
 - LINDA LIN
 - SCOTT CERULLO

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1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Good evening. Thank you
2 for coming tonight and welcome to the second
3 round of the New York City Districting
4 Commission's public hearing. My name is Benito
5 Romano and I am the chair of the New York City
6 Districting Commission. On behalf of the
7 Commission, I want to thank LaGuardia Community
8 College and President Gail Mellow for hosting us
9 here tonight.

10 We have the facility for only a few hours,
11 and I want to make sure that we hear from
12 everyone who is signed up. For those of you who
13 did not sign up, but wish to speak, please see a
14 staff person, at the registration desk, outside,
15 to register. If you require translation for your
16 testimony, please let the staff, at the
17 registration desk, know, and they will ensure
18 that a translator will be provided when it's your
19 turn to testify.

20 Before we take testimony, I would like to
21 make a few observations. At the beginning of
22 this month, the Commission advertised, in
23 community and ethnic newspapers, announcing the
24 Commission's public hearing schedule. An e-mail
25 blast was sent to over 5,500 individuals and

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1 organizations. Various advocacy groups helped
2 spread the word, through their individual
3 networks, and the hearing schedule was publicized
4 on our Facebook page and Twitter feed. We will
5 continue to find other ways to maximize community
6 participation and interest, but that's what we
7 have done so far.

8 Tonight represents the second round of
9 public hearings that the Commission will conduct
10 throughout the City. Over 450 individuals
11 attended our first round of hearings, in late
12 August, and the Commission heard from 131 others.

13 Since then, the Commission has released a
14 preliminary draft of the Council District Plan,
15 on September 4th, that adjusted the current
16 council lines for population proportionality,
17 because, in the last decade, many council
18 districts have either increased or decreased in
19 population, creating significant deviations from
20 the ideal district population of 160,710.

21 The preliminary draft plan was also posted
22 on the Commission's website,
23 www.nyc.gov/districting, displayed in public
24 areas, such as the Brooklyn Borough Hall, the
25 Queens Library and the Districting Commission's

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1 offices in Lower Manhattan, and linked to other
2 websites, such as the New York Public Library's.
3 On the same date, the Commission also launched an
4 online mapping tool, to allow the public to draw
5 council district maps for the Commission's
6 consideration.

7 The Commission staff also opened the
8 resource room at the Commission's offices. The
9 resource room is available for those, without
10 access to a computer terminal, who wish to draw
11 and submit a map to the Commission, or for those
12 wishing to receive one-on-one assistance with map
13 drawing, because the resource room is also
14 staffed by Justin Bassett, our mapping associate.
15 The room is by appointment only, but it is open
16 past normal business hours, and I am sure we can
17 accommodate you.

18 The Commission has received a few maps, so
19 far, and we encourage you to explore the mapping
20 tool available on our website. You will also be
21 able to see some of the maps submitted by the
22 public.

23 Finally, the Commission has launched a
24 Speakers' Bureau, where an organization or group
25 can request a staff member to talk about the

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1 decennial districting process. So far, the
2 Speakers' Bureau has addressed a number of civic
3 organizations, community boards and even a
4 grade-school class. If there is anyone wishing
5 to have the Speakers' Bureau address their group
6 or organization, please see Jonathan Ettricks or
7 Carlos Carino to set up an appointment.

8 The Commission is eager to hear tonight's
9 testimony and comments on the preliminary draft
10 plan. After tonight's hearing, and the others in
11 the second round of hearings, the Commission will
12 consider the comments during its next scheduled
13 public meeting on October 18th. At that meeting,
14 the Commission will direct the staff to revise
15 the preliminary district plan in response to the
16 comments received during the second round of
17 public hearings.

18 Then, at the Commission's public meeting on
19 October 30th, a revised plan, reflecting the
20 comments received, will be presented and the
21 Commission will decide whether to adopt it. If
22 the Commission adopts the plan, it will then be
23 delivered to the City Council for its inspection
24 and approval by November 5th.

25 According to the City Charter, by

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1 November 26th, the City Council must either adopt
2 the revised district plan, at which point it will
3 be filed with the City Clerk or the Council can
4 object to the revised plan, at which point the
5 plan will be returned to the Commission with the
6 Council's comments and concerns.

7 If the Council takes neither action, it will
8 be deemed adopted. If the Council objects to the
9 revised district plan, the Commission will then
10 have until January 5, 2013, to create a revised
11 plan. This will then trigger a new set of public
12 hearings to receive comments and feedback on the
13 revised plan. The Commission will then have
14 until March 5th to create, adopt and submit a
15 final plan to the City Clerk and to the U.S.
16 Department of Justice for preclearance under the
17 Voting Rights Act.

18 This process is described in a flow chart,
19 that is available for you tonight, as it was
20 during the first round of hearings. Other
21 handouts include a copy of the preliminary draft
22 map, an enlarged map of Queens, with the
23 preliminary draft map lines, and a listing of the
24 public participation tools that are available.

25 It's, again, worth noting that there are

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1 certain factors that the law obligates the
2 Commission to consider during the districting
3 process. These include the difference in
4 population, between the least populous and the
5 most populous district, shall not exceed ten
6 percent of the average population for all
7 districts.

8 Districts must fairly and effectively
9 represent racial and language minority groups in
10 New York City. Districts must keep neighborhoods
11 and communities, with established ties and
12 association, intact. Districts must be compact
13 and must be contiguous with one another.
14 Districts must be kept within the same borough
15 and districts must avoid diminishing the
16 effective representation of voters.

17 I want to, finally, bring to your attention
18 our website at www.nyc.gov/districting. The site
19 is the central repository of all documents and
20 videos related to the Districting Commission. It
21 also contains a complete schedule of our public
22 hearings, all documents and maps submitted to the
23 Commission, our online mapping tool, a portal,
24 where you can preregister for all hearings and be
25 added to our mailing list. I hope you will all

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1 visit the website and let us know how it can be
2 made more informative and interactive.

3 One final note. We have a number of
4 speakers tonight. Each of you has three minutes,
5 which is not very long. But keep in mind, we
6 have assembled a substantial amount of data from
7 the U.S. Census and elsewhere. We also will take
8 any written submission you wish to offer. The
9 data, we have, will be important to our decision,
10 but these hearings provide critical input as
11 well. Tell us about your neighborhoods. Not
12 just the maps, but what they are like. Tell us
13 where you think the natural boundaries are and
14 why they should be there.

15 Now, that concludes my opening remarks. We
16 will now have the Commissioners introduce
17 themselves beginning on my far left (indicating).

18 MR. HACKWORTH: Thaddeus Hackworth, staff to
19 the Commission.

20 MR. OGNIBENE: Thomas Ognibene, Queens
21 County.

22 MS. LIN: Linda Lin, Queens.

23 MS. PERSAUD: Roxanne Persaud, Brooklyn.

24 MS. BRAGG: Jamila Ponton Bragg, Manhattan.

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Benito Romano, Manhattan.

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1 MR. HUM: Carl Hum, staff to the commission.

2 MS. WOLFE: Gloria Carvajal Wolfe,
3 Manhattan.

4 MR. CERULLO: Scott Cerullo, Staten Island.

5 MR. PADAVAN: Frank Padavan, Queens.

6 MR. HACKWORTH: Before I call the first
7 speaker, I will explain the ground rules for
8 giving testimony tonight. As the Chairman said,
9 each speaker has three minutes to testify. When
10 your three minutes have expired, you will hear a
11 chime. At that point, please finish your
12 sentence and yield the microphone to the next
13 speaker. Because the Commission only has the use
14 of these facilities until nine o'clock, taking
15 more than your three minutes of time, may result
16 in your neighbor or fellow community member not
17 being able to speak at all.

18 Please keep that in mind and be respectful
19 to others wishing to testify. If you would like
20 to provide more detailed testimony to the
21 Commission, you are encouraged to submit your
22 written testimony by providing a copy at the
23 registration desk, or by e-mailing it to
24 hearings@districting.nyc.gov, or by mailing it to
25 the Commission's office.

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1 I will first call those who preregistered to
2 speak, followed by those who registered, today,
3 at the desk. I will announce the next speaker as
4 well as the following speaker. When you hear
5 your name called, please approach the nearest
6 microphone, so that you can be ready to give
7 testimony when your name is called. If you have
8 any questions, please ask our staff members at
9 the registration desk. I will now call our first
10 speaker, Mr. James Hong, to be followed by
11 Mr. Steven Choi. (Applause).

12 MR. HONG: Good afternoon, members and staff
13 of the Districting Commission, Chairman Romano,
14 citizens and residents of Queens. My name is
15 James Hong and I am speaking on behalf of ACCORD,
16 the Asian-American Community Coalition on
17 Restricting and Democracy. Our mission, as a
18 pan-Asian, nonpartisan coalition, is to advance
19 the opportunities for all Asian-Americans to have
20 meaningful participation in their elections.

21 Being divided among different districts, the
22 fracturing or cracking of minority populations
23 is, today, the greatest problem New York City's
24 Asian-Americans are facing, in our current
25 districts lines, and in the preliminary map

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1 released last month. It feels a bit like déjà
2 vu, standing here with our members and allies
3 making our statements today, and that's for a
4 good reason. Because little has changed since
5 August, when we were commenting on the current
6 district lines. I would like to ask everyone and
7 our allies to stand and deliver our message to
8 the Commission today. We hope you hear us today
9 and for the next draft.

10 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are
11 divided, right now, along Lefferts Boulevard
12 between Districts 28 and 32. Lefferts Boulevard
13 is a main thoroughfare for that neighborhood and
14 community. End the cracking of Richmond Hill's
15 Asian-American community. Unite Richmond Hill.

16 The neighborhood of Bayside is also divided,
17 with a northern section in District 19, and the
18 southern portion, of the neighborhood, falling
19 into District 23.

20 This area, also known as Oakland Gardens,
21 should be included in District 19. The
22 residents, of Oakland Gardens, often identify
23 themselves as living in Bayside. And at the last
24 Queens hearing, various residents, of eastern
25 Queens, independently supported the inclusion of

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1 the Oakland Gardens area into District 19.

2 For our working definitions of these
3 neighborhoods, we, again, recommend AALDEF's
4 community boundaries survey.

5 The neighborhood of Elmhurst is even more
6 divided now according to the preliminary draft,
7 with large parts of it now joined to the 29th
8 District. Elmhurst, a heavily Asian-immigrant
9 neighborhood, shares much more in common with the
10 rest of District 25 and Jackson Heights than with
11 Rego Park, Forest Hills and Kew Gardens of the
12 29th District.

13 The area bounded by the BQE on the west, the
14 Long Island Expressway on the south, Junction
15 Boulevard on the east and Roosevelt Avenue on the
16 north should be kept whole and be part of the
17 25th District. We, again, express our
18 coalition's support for the unity map drawn with
19 support from the African-American, Latino and
20 Asian-American communities.

21 On a positive note, I would like to say that
22 the neighborhood clusters of Bellerose, Floral
23 Park, Queens Village and Glen Oaks are currently
24 kept whole within a district and this should not
25 change.

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1 Briarwood and Jamaica Hills should stay
2 together and intact. Finally, Flushing, East
3 Flushing, Murray Hill and Queensboro Hill are,
4 largely, kept together within a single district
5 and this should not change.

6 So, in closing, as a community, as a
7 coalition, -- (three-minute timer alarms) -- we
8 are asking and we are saying hear our voices.
9 Make our voices and our votes count. Produce a
10 district plan that brings an equal voice to the
11 Asian-American residents and voters of Queens and
12 all of New York City. Thank you. (Applause).

13 MS. BRAGG: Excuse me.

14 Can you give me the boundaries that you want
15 -- you mentioned for 25 again?

16 Can you tell me what the natural boundaries
17 that you described?

18 MR. HONG: Sure. Sure. It's been submitted
19 to the front desk, but it's also -- this is for
20 part of -- this is part of Elmhurst, 25th, it
21 should be bounded by the BQE, the Brooklyn Queens
22 Expressway on the west, Long Island Expressway on
23 the south, Junction Boulevard on the east and
24 Roosevelt on the north. It's sort of a square.

25 MS. BRAGG: Thank you.

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1 MR. HONG: Sure.

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Steven
3 Choi, to be followed by Jerry Vattamala.

4 (Applause).

5 MR. CHOI: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Steven Choi and I am the executive director of
7 the MinKwon Center for Community Action. I am
8 here to comment on the proposed city council
9 districts that this Commission has offered.

10 The MinKwon Center was established in 1984
11 to meet the needs of the Korean-American
12 community. Since our founding, we have had a
13 profound presence on the Korean-American,
14 Asian-American and local communities through
15 organizing, education and advocacy initiatives
16 that have addressed important community issues.

17 As a proud member of ACCORD, the
18 Asian-American Community Coalition on
19 Redistricting and Democracy, the MinKwon Center
20 has been active, because we believe that fair and
21 equitable redistricting is absolutely critical to
22 increasing the civic engagement of our
23 communities. Our voters have, historically, been
24 disempowered and disenfranchised by complicated
25 procedures, a lack of translated materials and by

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1 intimidation and harassment.

2 The MinKwon Center has sought to overcome
3 these obstacles by registering new voters,
4 educating them about the process, mobilizing them
5 to vote and then protecting them at the polls. I
6 want to emphasize that the goal of our efforts is
7 completely nonpartisan. We do not support or
8 endorse any politicians or parties.

9 Instead, our goal is to empower our
10 communities and have districts that are drawn
11 properly in ways that respect natural communities
12 of interest and uphold the Voting Rights Act.
13 And we are rewarded with competitive elections,
14 politicians, who are accountable to their
15 communities, and disenfranchised minorities, who
16 are now protected.

17 This is critical for the Asian-American
18 community, which has grown by more than
19 30 percent since 2000, and is, by far, the
20 fastest-growing, major racial group in New York.
21 Nineteen City Council members have districts
22 where Asian-Americans make up more than
23 15 percent of their constituents. Yet, many of
24 those City Council members are unaware of their
25 needs and concerns.

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1 ACCORD has worked with Latino, black,
2 Asian-American and Korean communities to create
3 the unity maps, which we believe truly represent
4 communities of interest. Yet, I join my ACCORD
5 colleagues in expressing disbelief and anger,
6 because the unity maps were simply ignored when
7 this Commission drew their proposed districts.

8 We, at the MinKwon Center, agree that the
9 growing South Asian communities in Richmond Hill
10 and South Ozone Park are unacceptably divided.
11 The Chinese and South Asian communities in
12 Chinatown, especially Sunset Park and
13 Bensonhurst, are not being kept whole. And as
14 for North Queens, in which we are based, our
15 neighborhoods are unacceptably divided.

16 The Oakland Gardens neighborhood was not
17 included in District 19, the rest of Bayside, and
18 instead was put in District 23, although the
19 residents believe themselves to be living in
20 Bayside.

21 The neighborhood of Elmhurst is even more
22 divided. Elmhurst is home to a heavily-immigrant
23 community with a surging number of Asian-American
24 recent immigrants.

25 This area shares a great deal in common with

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1 the rest of District 25 in Jackson Heights, but
2 instead has been placed, with very different
3 communities, in the 29th District, and James Hong
4 has outlined the boundaries there.

5 So I close, again, by referring to the unity
6 maps, -- (three-minute timer alarms) -- we
7 believe, truly reflect our principles of equality
8 and fairness. The MinKwon Center will continue
9 to organize and mobilize, so that
10 Korean-American, Asian-American and marginalized
11 communities are being heard. We are committed to
12 making sure that redistricting helps strengthen
13 democracy. Not undermine it. Thank you.

14 (Applause).

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Jerry
16 Vattamala, to be followed by Chejin Park.

17 MR. VATTAMALA: Good evening. My name is
18 Jerry Vattamala and I am a staff attorney at the
19 Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund,
20 AALDEF. AALDEF is the 38-year-old, New
21 York-based, national organization that protects
22 and promotes the civil rights of Asian-Americans
23 through litigation, advocacy, community education
24 and organizing.

25 This year, in coalition with LatinoJustice,

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1 PRLDEF, the National Institute for Latino Policy
2 and the Center for Social Justice at Medgar Evers
3 College, we developed a unity map for New York
4 congressional, State Senate, State Assembly and
5 New York City council districts. The unity map,
6 for the New York City Council, was submitted to
7 this Districting Commission on August 30, 2012,
8 and is the only full, 51-district, citywide
9 proposal that has been submitted to the
10 Commission.

11 The unity map applies all legal requirements
12 including one person, one vote, the Voting Rights
13 Act and all requirements of the City Charter.
14 The New York City Charter explicitly lists the
15 criteria to be considered in redistricting,
16 prioritizes and lists the order. The first
17 priority is keeping districts within a ten
18 percent deviation.

19 The second priority requires this Commission
20 to ensure the fair and effective representation
21 of the racial and language minority groups, in
22 New York City, which are protected by the Voting
23 Rights Act. Those groups are African-Americans,
24 Latinos and Asian-Americans.

25 The third requirement, the third priority on

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1 the list, requires this Commission to keep,
2 intact, neighborhoods and communities with
3 established ties of common interest and
4 association, whether racial, economic, ethnic or
5 religious. That's what is required under the
6 charter.

7 Keeping communities of interest together
8 will ensure that Asian-Americans will have full
9 and fair opportunity to elect candidates of their
10 choice, in accordance with the Voting Rights Act
11 of 1965 and the New York City Charter.

12 We are disappointed that the Commission's
13 preliminary map, released on September 4, 2012,
14 failed to take into account the statements made
15 by numerous advocates and community residents
16 during the first round of public hearings in
17 August 2012.

18 At the Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens
19 hearings, Asian-Americans, repeatedly, pointed
20 out the changing demographics of their
21 communities and urged this Commission to keep
22 Asian-American neighborhoods together within
23 single districts wherever possible. Those
24 statements were not reflected in the preliminary
25 draft.

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1 I submitted my statement to the Commission.
2 You will see I am going to echo the same
3 comments. Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park is
4 unacceptably divided along Lefferts Boulevard,
5 it's now a divided community, in half. Elmhurst
6 has now been made worse, divided in half, and
7 Bayside continues to be divided in half, despite
8 the numerous members, of the community, that came
9 out and asked that their communities be united.

10 The unity map, for congressional districts,
11 was substantially adopted and implemented by the
12 Federal Court almost six months ago. Once again,
13 we urge this Commission to take a closer look at
14 the 51-district unity map, that AALDEF has
15 submitted with its partners from the Latino,
16 African-American and Asian-American community.
17 The unity map reflects the changing
18 demographics -- (three-minute timer alarms) -- of
19 New York City. We urge this Commission to look
20 at the unity map, adopt the unity map, and follow
21 the requirements of the City Charter.

22 And in closing, the last page of my
23 testimony has the preliminary draft lines, which
24 are the lines where the Asian-American
25 neighborhood boundaries are overlaid, so it

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1 illustrates how the communities are divided to
2 numerous districts. Thank you. (Applause).

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you, Mr. Vattamala.
4 I can assure you we are look closely at the unity
5 map.

6 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
7 Chejin Park, to be followed by Harpreet Toor.

8 MR. NO: Chejin Park is not here today. My
9 name is Chae No. I will be speaking in proxy.
10 Good evening. My name is Chae No, program
11 coordinator of Korean-American Civic Empowerment,
12 or KACE. KACE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit
13 community education and advocacy organization
14 devoted to empowering Korean-American and
15 Asian-American communities in New York City.

16 On behalf of Korean-Americans and Queens
17 County, KACE urges the Redistricting Commission
18 to keep the Korean-American community, in
19 Bayside, undivided and their votes undiluted by
20 recognizing the Asian-American Legal Defense and
21 Education Fund unity map, for which many
22 Asian-American community organizations provided
23 information about each ethnic community's
24 social-economic, geographic boundaries to draw
25 the neighborhood maps.

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1 A community of interest is where residents
2 have actual shared interests or some common
3 thread of social, economic or political interest.
4 Keeping us together is one of the traditional
5 districting criteria. Also, the New York City
6 Charter mandates the Redistricting Commission to
7 keep COIs intact. Among the COIs, KACE and
8 Korean-American communities are especially
9 interested in two neighborhoods, Flushing and
10 Bayside, where Korean-Americans are concentrated.

11 Most parts of the Flushing Asian COI is
12 included in Council District 20. However, the
13 Bayside and Asian-American COIs are divided into
14 Council Districts 19 and 23. On August 21st,
15 KACE and other Asian-American organizations
16 recommended that the Bayside COI be placed into
17 Council District 19. We especially urge that a
18 neighborhood, Oakland Gardens, situated between
19 the Long Island Expressway and 73rd Avenue, in
20 between Cunningham Park and Alley Pond Park,
21 should be included in Council District 19.

22 The residents, in the neighborhood, consider
23 the neighborhood as a part of Bayside and they
24 often use the mailing address as Bayside. They
25 send their high-school children to Benjamin

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1 Cardozo High School, which is located in Bayside.
2 They also shop across the Long Island Expressway.
3 However, the map, proposed by the New York City
4 Districting Commission, proves that the
5 Commission didn't listen to what the community
6 members requested.

7 The proposed map not only failed to keep
8 Asian-American communities together, but also
9 made the situation worse by allowing more parts
10 of the community to be included into District 23.

11 KACE strongly urges the Districting
12 Commission to keep Bayside undivided and include
13 the neighborhood, having its boundaries of
14 Cunningham Park, Alley Pond Park, Long Island
15 Expressway and 73rd Avenue into Council District
16 19. Thank you. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Harpreet
18 Toor, to be followed by John Albert.

19 MR. TOOR: First let me thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman and the Committee, for giving me the
21 opportunity to speak. Again, when you mentioned
22 that advertisements went out to the local media
23 and to all of the ethnic communities, the
24 communities living in New York City, I am sorry
25 to point out that it never happened. In our

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1 community, I did not see a single advertisement
2 in our community. So those are the issues.
3 That's why we are here today.

4 I am going to talk about, even though we
5 have the neighborhoods like Briarwood, Jamaica
6 Hills, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Bellerose,
7 Queens Village, Floral Park, Astoria and Long
8 Island City, that's where the South Asian and
9 Asian communities are increasing. But if we look
10 at the borders of Queens and Brooklyn, right next
11 to the west of Woodhaven Boulevard, there is a
12 huge Bangladeshi community, also, which is a
13 growing population.

14 But, I am here to talk about Richmond Hill,
15 South Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and Ozone
16 Park, which is divided between 28 and 22. It was
17 divided into four districts, before this
18 preliminary map came out, where it had been
19 divided into two.

20 My name is Harpreet Toor, and at present, I
21 am the chairman of public policy, at the Sikh
22 Cultural Society, located in Richmond Hill on
23 118th Street. I have been in this neighborhood
24 and this community or served in this neighborhood
25 since I came to this country. I am honored to

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1 know Mr. Padavan, also on a personal basis,
2 because we worked together when he was elected,
3 and he worked in that community and that
4 neighborhood.

5 To get a better background on the Sikh
6 Cultural Society, it was established in 1965. We
7 moved into this building in 1972. It was a
8 church, which was a Methodist church, built in
9 1896. We moved in, and if we look at the
10 neighborhood now, the neighborhood is changed.

11 There are half a dozen
12 cultural organizations, besides mosques and
13 churches, which are located in South Ozone Hill,
14 in the neighborhood, to serve the needs of the
15 communities. There are shops, that also show, if
16 we really look around Atlantic Avenue, Lefferts
17 Boulevard, Liberty Avenue and Rockaway, showing
18 the same thing, immigrants, of this community,
19 moving into that neighborhood.

20 Right now, the boundary lines are divided
21 into Lefferts Boulevard, which comes through the
22 heart of the community, and we are requesting you
23 to move it to the Van Wyck, which will be a more
24 natural line of border to keep these communities
25 together.

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1 All these things, which I am talking --
2 (three-minute timer alarms) -- I am short of
3 time. It's all written in there.

4 And, also, at the same time, there is just
5 one thing more which I would like to say. I know
6 that I am running out of time right here now,
7 that the communities, if we are left together, we
8 can ask for services, which have been denied to
9 us right now, by any elected official, by not
10 showing any interest in our community. Thank you
11 very much. They have to do more. That's a good
12 sign. I really like it and that's what I expect.
13 Thank you. (Applause).

14 MR. HACKWORTH: I have a question on behalf
15 of the staff. You mentioned that you did not
16 receive any outreach efforts in your community.

17 What is the best method to advertise to your
18 community?

19 Is there a particular newspaper or
20 something?

21 MR. TOOR: Well, I have the whole list. If
22 somebody starts out there, somebody can reach out
23 to me, I will give you the whole South Asian
24 area, TV channels, TV media.

25 MR. HACKWORTH: If you could leave it with

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1 the desk, I would appreciate that.

2 MR. TOOR: I will do that. Thank you.

3 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is John
4 Albert, to be followed by Council Member Dan
5 Halloran.

6 MR. ALBERT: Hi. Good evening. My name is
7 John Albert. I have copies of my testimony. I
8 think it might be illustrative to see some of the
9 maps. So, again, my name is John Albert. I run
10 an organization called Taking Our Seat. Taking
11 Our Seat was formed specifically to empower the
12 South-Asian-American community within the
13 electoral process. And our first focus was to
14 stop voter dilution, because I think that's the
15 number one problem facing us, in our community,
16 within the electoral process.

17 Taking our Seat is a proud member of ACCORD.
18 We are happy to join our folks here and add our
19 voice to theirs. We are a strong supporter of
20 the unity map. So I think what you are going to
21 find here is a lot of the folks talking about the
22 benefits of the unity map. And what we advocate
23 for is the unity map to be adopted, as a whole,
24 not piecemealed.

25 I just wanted to point out a couple of

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1 things. There's a lot of talk about the Census.
2 According to the 2010 Census, there are 351,000
3 South-Asian-Americans in New York.

4 I don't think that is part of the overall
5 Asian number that makes it out there. That is a
6 61 percent increase since the last redistricting,
7 61 percent, and nearly 60 percent of those people
8 are living in Queens County.

9 What you are seeing here, representative in
10 the room, reflects the tremendous growth that
11 took place over the last ten years. I am not
12 going to repeat prior testimony, but I am going
13 to refocus, again, on Richmond Hill and South
14 Ozone Park.

15 We believe that the Districting Commission's
16 proposal to split or to propose Lefferts
17 Boulevard, as a boundary, is unacceptable and we
18 ask that that be moved to the Van Wyck Expressway
19 in the east. What we have done, actually, is we
20 have actually proposed our own set of maps, but
21 only in relation to south and southern Queens.
22 We stand behind the unity map and we, again,
23 propose that it's adopted in whole. But what we
24 did decide to do, was address the changes that
25 you made in your proposal.

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1 So these are some of the changes that I can
2 outline: One, moving the Lefferts Boulevard
3 boundary east to the Van Wyck.

4 Two, what this does is it combined -- our
5 proposal combines the Rockaways into one
6 community of interest, and we believe that that
7 is the best solution for the Rockaways, and
8 that's because they share the same transportation
9 line, and they share the same police precinct,
10 and they share similar or the same community
11 boards. And so, the Rockaways need to be kept
12 together in order to have justice for Richmond
13 Hill.

14 Our plan also keeps Cambria Heights
15 together. It really takes the focus of the
16 community boundaries that the Districting
17 Commission, itself, endorses in your software.

18 (Three-minute timer alarms).

19 So we hope you take a look at our plan.
20 Just to summarize, we support the unity map, so
21 long as it is accepted in total, and we propose
22 our maps, if you choose to look at Richmond Hill
23 very specifically. Thank you. (Applause).

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is the
25 Honorable Dan Halloran, to be followed by Al

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1 Baldeo.

2 MR. HALLORAN: Commissioner, I express my
3 strongest objection to the proposed redistricting
4 of northeast Queens. Three council districts
5 have been chopped up in a manner that does not
6 actually serve the Commission's ends of keeping
7 communities united.

8 Your proposal specifically divides the
9 College Point community of Mitchell-Linden, and
10 its apartment complexes, between the 19th and the
11 20th, in half. It takes an entire multifamily,
12 multifloor-dwelling, apartment complex and cuts
13 it down the middle.

14 This district has, historically, been part
15 of Council District 20 and does not fit into the
16 zoning of Council District 19, which is all R2,
17 R2A and R3. That's an R5 building, and half of
18 it is in my district, and half in Peter Koo's.
19 It's completely inappropriate.

20 Auburndale, you have chopped it up in three
21 council districts. Auburndale is, again, an R2,
22 R2A community, and it consists of territories
23 that run in the southern part of Council District
24 19, currently, into Council Districts 20 and 23.
25 So you have chopped up the community of

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1 Auburndale.

2 Finally, you have also continued to split
3 Bayside Hills into two parts. Part in the 23rd.
4 Part in the 19th. I thought the goal was to
5 bring these communities into one, single council
6 district.

7 The 19th Council District is completely
8 low-density, one- and two-family homes, with the
9 exception of the Bay Terrace community, which is
10 entirely surrounded in the northern part of the
11 quadrant. Every district home, in my council
12 district, is under three stories. You have now
13 included, in this R2A zone, Mitchell-Linden,
14 which is an R5. It will seriously impact and
15 dilute the low-density zoning of my district.

16 Instead, I propose that you unite
17 Mitchell-Linden and return it to the 20th Council
18 District, where it has been for the last 20
19 years, where it is at home with the other R5, R6
20 and R7 neighborhoods in that community. To
21 supplement this change, the Commission should add
22 the rest of North Flushing to my council
23 district. Union Street and 33rd Avenue should be
24 the boundary. The Commission can then, easily,
25 take all of North Flushing and bring it into the

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1 19th Council District.

2 All of that area are one- and two-family
3 homes governed by R2A and R3 zoning. Auburndale,
4 which has been divided amongst the 19th, 20th and
5 23rd Council Districts, is unfair. As a result,
6 the civic associations, that cover the entire
7 area, are all united in opposition to this plan.

8 The Auburndale community, working with three
9 different council members, has had a tough time,
10 as it is, to get City services scheduled and
11 properly handled. I suggest using 159th Street
12 and Underhill Avenue, Hollis Court Boulevard,
13 Francis Lewis Boulevard as the boundaries for
14 this Auburndale community, wholly within the 19th
15 Council District, again, Auburndale is an R2A and
16 R3 zoning area.

17 The community deserves to be united under a
18 single council district, as does the community of
19 Bayside Hills, which has remained --
20 (three-minute timer alarms) -- divided over the
21 last ten years. I propose Bayside Hills, in the
22 area immediately surrounding, be divided up
23 either into the 23rd Council District or the 19th
24 Council District, wholly, using Northern
25 Boulevard as the dividing line for the

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1 Commission.

2 I have stood with members of the Bayside
3 Hills Civic Group, who are also opposed. Today,
4 my office was informed, by Community Board 11,
5 that its chairman issued a unanimous opinion, of
6 Community Board 11, in opposition to the plan
7 that this Commission has presented. I have a
8 submission to give to you and a copy of the map,
9 that our council office has created, that reflect
10 these changes, and I would hope, you very
11 seriously, take it into consideration. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: I assure you, we will.
14 Thank you, very much. (Applause).

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Al
16 Baldeo, to be followed by Leela Maret.

17 MR. BALDEO: Good evening, members of this
18 Commission. My name is Al Baldeo. I am an
19 elected district leader, community advocate and
20 an attorney. I am here to speak on behalf of the
21 residents of Richmond Hill.

22 The last time we were here, and I want to
23 ask the question again: Is there anyone, in this
24 room, who would like to see Richmond Hill united?

25 Can you say so, please?

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1 And, again, you have a sense, and I submit
2 to you, respectfully, that the map, behind you,
3 is a farce, insofar as Richmond Hill is
4 concerned, because you have not moved the
5 boundaries.

6 All we did was make a few adjustments. The
7 problem lies in this map, here, and I have
8 submitted here, Mr. Commissioner, for each of you
9 to see, the testimony, the maps, and, also, the
10 arguments we used in accordance with the New York
11 City Charter and the Voting Rights Act. The
12 problem, here, is that Richmond Hill is spread
13 down the middle. You have divided it into two.
14 It's like truncating it.

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: One second.

16 MR. BALDEO: Sure. And it's on those maps,
17 Mr. Chairman. My only problem is the clock is
18 running against my time. (Laughter).

19 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: What page are you on?

20 MR. BALDEO: Oh, these are some maps, that
21 are submitted, and it's also on the second page.
22 Also, you have the maps, in his hands, there
23 (indicating), that shows the divided community,
24 Council District 32 and Council District 28,
25 right down the middle, and up the critical mass,

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1 like a spear through the heart of Richmond Hill.

2 There are two alternative maps, that show,
3 from the AALDEF and from the unity map, that show
4 the districts together. There, you have this.

5 Right?

6 All right.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Go ahead and I will start
8 the clock a little later.

9 MR. BALDEO: Here's the problem,
10 Mr. Chairman and members of this honorable
11 Commission, you have lumped the second-largest
12 co-op in the world, Rochdale Village, with the
13 one- and two-family homes of Richmond Hills. And
14 hence, you have marginalized the one- and
15 two-family homes, in Richmond Hill, and the
16 constituents, thereof, because their voices are
17 not heard.

18 Their needs are not met. They are
19 marginalized and they are ignored in very many
20 respects. And the most basic services, and
21 everything that concerns governmental services,
22 Richmond Hill remains the orphan child of Queens,
23 and that, we need to get straight and resolve
24 that issue with this Commission.

25 The problem, here, goes on.

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1 How do you treat one of the largest
2 tax-paying and growing groups, in New York City,
3 by marginalizing it and dividing it into two?

4 Again, I reiterate what the other speakers
5 have said. You move the line in accordance with
6 the unity map, or diversity map, more to the Van
7 Wyck Expressway, which is not only a natural
8 divide, but it's also the most common-sense thing
9 to do, because that is where you have a critical
10 mass kept together in Richmond Hill.

11 Mr. Chairman, I am living testimony that
12 people, looking like me, sounding like me, are
13 electable. In 2006, I almost won the State
14 Senate seat, by almost taking out the Republican
15 State Senator, Serphin Maltese, who was a 20-year
16 incumbent. So it's not that we are not
17 electable.

18 It's just that we want to have the basic
19 democratic choice to have people elect one of us,
20 one of their own, who understands the cultural,
21 the historical patterns, the heritage and the
22 great things that we bring to this country, and
23 that has sadly been lacking from all of the
24 Redistricting Commissions going back three
25 decades.

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1 We have been used as filler material. We
2 are merely filling others. We are not asking for
3 a majority in this district. If you notice, in
4 the majority map, the majority, here, is still
5 white, 27 percent. Hispanics are 26 percent. We
6 are up 21 percent, the Asian population there.
7 The problem there, Mr. Chairman and members of
8 this Commission, is that we are only asking to be
9 kept whole, so that our issues, our problems and
10 solutions are understood and are kept together.

11 And I would like to tell you this: There
12 was a councilman, by the name of Tom White, who
13 never, one day, stepped over the Van Wyck
14 Expressway to come to Richmond Hill --
15 (three-minute timer alarms) -- to listen or to
16 solve any of our problems, and that's a crying
17 same. Our children die for this country. We pay
18 taxes. We are responsible citizens. And that
19 must change with this Commission, because, going
20 forward, we feel marginalized, ostracized and we
21 ask you to do the right thing.

22 We have no representatives in Federal, State
23 or City government. I am the only one who stands
24 as a district leader. We are one of the
25 largest-growing groups, in New York City, and

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1 that is all in my testimony. And in accordance
2 with the Voting Rights Act and the City Charter,
3 you have breached these by not ensuring fair and
4 effective representation as a community group.

5 And we ask that you do the right thing and
6 make sure that you move the line from Lefferts to
7 the Van Wyck Expressway. Make us whole. We are
8 not in South Africa or an apartheid system. We
9 are in America and we need to have those rights
10 respected. I know you will do the right thing.
11 Thank you, very much. (Applause).

12 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Leela
13 Maret, to be followed by Susan Wong.

14 MS. MARET: Respected Commission, and the
15 community leaders, and friends, my name is Leela
16 Maret. I was the Recording Secretary for Local
17 375, DC37 for the last ten years, and DC37, is
18 the largest municipal union, in the City,
19 representing 135,000 members. The City employs
20 nurses, cross guards, teachers, police officers,
21 firefighters and makes the City work day by day.

22 I am a community activist and vice president
23 of the Indian Association of North America and
24 Canada, and I lived in Richmond Hill for the last
25 25 years. The Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park

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1 community of interest still continues to be
2 divided. It takes a continuous area of
3 population, of people of common interest, culture
4 and heritage and the community is
5 disenfranchised, chopped up and fragmented.

6 That is the Indo-Caribbeans are a group of
7 same origin and background. We also congregate
8 in the same places of worship. We are heavily
9 populated and are disbursed. The children go to
10 same high school and share common country of
11 origin, dialect and language. We have opened up
12 small businesses in Richmond Hill that reflect
13 our culture.

14 We have local newspapers, and West Indian
15 Caribbean, New York programs, for the needs of
16 our community, and share community services and
17 other issues. We identify as Americans, who can
18 trace our ancestry back to South Asia. We do not
19 have health clinics, community centers, day-care
20 centers, senior centers, social-service centers
21 or even job-training centers in the area.

22 It is most important for family policy,
23 urban policy, foreign policy, neighborhood policy
24 to have representation by all people. We are
25 part of the economic of New York. We are asking

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1 for the opportunity to become part of the
2 mechanics of America. We do not have any South
3 Asian elected, so far, to the City Council. We
4 would like to have a piece of the pie, too. We
5 are one of the fastest-growing ethnic
6 populations.

7 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park
8 communities should be kept as one district, as it
9 functions as one neighborhood. It should be
10 unified into one community, that must be kept
11 together and not splintered. The proposed
12 district lines still continue to split our
13 neighborhood.

14 We are very disappointed. We strongly
15 emphasize to redraw the district line with
16 Atlantic Avenue, the Conduit, -- (three-minute
17 timer alarms) -- and the Van Wyck Expressway, and
18 City line as its boundaries. We attach, the
19 proposed map, for consideration. My heartfelt
20 thanks to the Commission for consideration.
21 Thank you. (Applause).

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Susan
23 Wong, to be followed by William Stanford, Jr.

24 MS. WONG: Good evening. My name is Susan
25 Wong. I have been a Queens resident for over ten

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1 years, and I live at 63-84 Landis Street, and
2 that is part of Rego Park. I am a counselor at
3 Baruch College. I am testifying on behalf of OCA
4 and I have been a member for over ten years.

5 OCA New York, formerly known as the
6 Organization of Chinese Americans, is a
7 nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, dedicated to
8 protecting and advancing the political, economic,
9 social and cultural rights of Asian-Americans.
10 OCA New York is a founding member of ACCORD.
11 That's the Asian-American Community Coalition on
12 Redistricting and Democracy.

13 In the interest of time, please look at my
14 written statement to see what OCA New York has
15 done in Queens. The 2010 Census shows 500,000
16 Asians live in Queens alone. OCA New York's
17 position is based on its community involvement,
18 input from its Queens members and the 2010
19 Census.

20 Proposed District 25 divides Elmhurst,
21 primarily, at the district's southwestern
22 boundary. This boundary excludes an active part
23 of Elmhurst that stretches all the way to the
24 Long Island Expressway. Elmhurst residents, in
25 District 25 shop, in at least three of the major

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1 ethnic grocery stores on Broadway, off of Queens
2 Boulevard, and at 51st Avenue and Queens
3 Boulevard.

4 These establishments are all in the area
5 that is not in District 25, but drawn into the
6 northern section of proposed District 29. The
7 significant Asian populations in Elmhurst, who
8 are in proposed District 25, frequently dine at
9 the restaurants along Broadway and shop at Queens
10 Center Mall, which are both in proposed
11 District 29. The majority Asian churches, at
12 Broadway and Columbia Avenue and Queens Boulevard
13 and Columbia Avenue, are also drawn into the
14 northern section of proposed District 29.

15 Given that this northern section is still
16 what most residents consider Elmhurst, it is very
17 different from other parts of proposed
18 District 29. While Elmhurst residents use
19 subways and bus lines on a daily basis, those who
20 live in 30, south of the Long Island Expressway,
21 use the Long Island Rail Road more often. Those
22 in the Forest Hills and Rego Park area of
23 District 29, shop at Trader Joe's and other
24 mainstream grocery stores.

25 Everything, in this section, is more

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1 expensive, like nail salons, boutiques,
2 restaurants and the rent is at least \$300 to \$500
3 higher. Please look at the proposed district in
4 the unity map, which lowers the natural southern
5 boundary, of District 25, to the Long Island
6 Expressway -- (three-minute timer alarms) -- to
7 encompass all of Elmhurst into one district.
8 Thank you. (Applause).

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is William
10 Stanford, Jr., to be followed by Richard David.

11 MR. STANFORD: The name is Mr. X. Let's get
12 that straight right now.

13 Okay?

14 To the chair, you mentioned you sent an
15 e-mail blast to us?

16 You didn't send me anything about this
17 and/or two public hearings.

18 What e-mail blast are you referring to?

19 I have a volunteer, at the website, in order
20 to see what is happening, for people to
21 reregister.

22 Okay?

23 You still didn't apologize for what you did
24 to me last Tuesday.

25 And my question is: Why didn't you

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1 accommodate me?

2 Were you too busy?

3 Were you too incompetent?

4 Were you too lazy or were you just too damn
5 yellow?

6 Which is it?

7 You tell me, Benito Romano, a/k/a

8 Mr. Potatohead.

9 Okay?

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Restrict your testimony to
11 the redistricting.

12 MR. STANFORD: Excuse me. Let me remind
13 you, Benito, you violated my rights last Tuesday.

14 Okay?

15 You mention the e-mail blast. You didn't
16 e-mail blast anything to me.

17 Okay?

18 So it's false advertisement.

19 Okay?

20 You said that these public hearings was
21 scheduled until 5:30 to nine.

22 Well, what happened at Staten Island
23 yesterday?

24 That public hearing ended before seven
25 o'clock.

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1 What happened in my borough last Tuesday?

2 That public hearing ended at 7:30, from what
3 I heard. You could have accommodated me if you
4 wanted. As I said before, you could have
5 accommodated me, last Tuesday, if you wanted to.
6 All you had to do was wait there until nine. You
7 could have waited until nine, even if put me
8 last, and you couldn't even do that.

9 And this mapping, first of all, I can't even
10 read this copy here. That copy is easier to read
11 out there. I can't read this, so, therefore, I
12 can't tell you how this map -- these districts
13 should be redrawn. So we have Districts 27 and
14 28.

15 Do we need Districts 27 and 28?

16 Can we just use one?

17 Because it's all in here, Queens,
18 southeastern Queens neighborhoods.

19 And Districts 22 and 26, do we need both?

20 They are here in Queens, northwest Queens.
21 This is confusing. I can't read this. Firstly,
22 these lines should be drawn directly in the
23 middle and they are not. As I said before, you
24 should go by the bus corridors. I'm sorry. This
25 is a sham. As I mentioned, this map, here, is a

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1 sham. I can't read this.

2 You made duplicate copies, that are somewhat
3 faded. You know -- (three-minute timer
4 alarms) -- you know.

5 Are you using a Xerox machine? (Applause).

6 Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Hold on.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker --

8 MR. STANFORD: Hold on. Let me ask a
9 question here.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: No. No question. Your time
11 is over.

12 MR. STANFORD: What did you use?

13 Did you use a Xerox machine?

14 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
15 Richard David, to be followed by Linda Lee.

16 MR. DAVID: That's a tough act to follow.
17 (Laughter). Thank you for the opportunity to
18 testify before you here today. I am Richard
19 David. I am the executive director of the
20 Indo-Caribbean Alliance or ICA. ICA is a
21 nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization,
22 that serves the Indo-Caribbean and South Asian
23 communities, or collectively the South Asian
24 community. This community traditionally includes
25 Guyanese, Trinidadian residents, Indians,

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1 Bengalis and other residents from the Caribbean
2 and South Asia, who trace their ancestry to South
3 Asia.

4 ICA provides civic advocacy as well as youth
5 development, cultural and community-building
6 programs, to residents in Richmond Hill, Ozone
7 Park and South Ozone Park and neighborhoods of
8 southern Queens. Those are Council Districts 28
9 and 32. We ask, and we actually ask again, we
10 make the same request that we made in August,
11 that this Districting Commission not continue to
12 divide Richmond Hill.

13 I reiterate these statements of previous
14 speakers today, who have pleaded before this
15 Commission the same way they pleaded in August,
16 asking each of you to seriously consider the
17 impact of your decision and to not maintain a
18 line that's in the middle, along Lefferts
19 Boulevard, of what we consider our community.

20 One of the issues with the current map is,
21 it's not reflective of the neighborhood. But
22 even if you wanted to ignore all of us today, we
23 have given you every reason not to. We are
24 probably the largest group of folks out here
25 today. We are also the largest groups of folks

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1 who were here at the last hearing. (Applause).

2 We have given you a map that works. We have
3 given you the numbers. There's not a single
4 reason for you to ignore our request. But still,
5 that line, down Lefferts Boulevard, is in the
6 middle of our community. There is not a single
7 good reason why is that. We are hoping that the
8 next of map, that is produced by the Commission,
9 is reflective of these changes, because there is
10 not a single reason not to.

11 I can't think of a reason, unless this
12 Commission is put together to dilute the power of
13 the residents in this area, and I don't believe
14 that's the case, because that's in your opening
15 remarks, that the Chairman, you clearly said that
16 that's not your intention. I don't understand
17 how that cannot be your intention, with the
18 testimony that you have heard testimony today,
19 and for the supporting documents that we have
20 provided already, and that you will continue to
21 hear for the rest of this year.

22 So, we ask you, I reiterate another request
23 for each of you to come out to Richmond Hill. I
24 will be happy to personally give you a tour,
25 because I think what you will see, on the ground,

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1 is undeniable, and you will be compelled to keep
2 this community together. We hope that you will
3 keep the district lines from the Van Wyck
4 Expressway to the City line, from Atlantic
5 Avenue, in the north, to the South Conduit in the
6 south. (Three-minute timer alarms). Thank you,
7 very much, and I appreciate the time.

8 (Applause).

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Linda
10 Lee, to be followed by Kenneth Cohen.

11 MS. LEE: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is
12 Linda Lee. I am the executive director of KCS,
13 Korean Community Services. We have been around
14 the community for 39 years. It is the oldest and
15 largest nonprofit serving the Korean community.
16 Thank you all for coming and listening to us.

17 I feel like it's like déjà vu. I have
18 copies of my testimony, which can you read. But
19 last time, when we were in Flushing, the two
20 areas that were talked about the most, probably,
21 were Bayside and Richmond Hill. It's kind of
22 surprising, to me, that the maps, that came out,
23 didn't really reflect what the community was
24 asking. I think all of us have been pretty
25 united in what we have been saying.

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1 It's sort of disheartening, a little bit,
2 that the maps have not reflected the changes that
3 the community has been asking for.
4 Organizations, like KCS, we are really on the
5 ground running. I am tired of budget cuts, and
6 having to provide services for the community, but
7 tired in a good way. That's our job, is to fight
8 for the community, to stand up for their voices,
9 to really represent them and make sure their
10 needs are being met.

11 That's why this whole process is so
12 important to our community, especially because in
13 the past, Asian-Americans have not really been
14 present and sort of taking a stand. I am proud
15 of the fact that we are all out here advocating
16 on behalf of our communities. That is something
17 I know my parents would be very proud of, which
18 is why we are here. (Applause).

19 So it's definitely a little disheartening,
20 like I said. So I will keep it short, so that
21 others can speak. But I urge you to, please,
22 please, please, look at the community maps, and
23 really take into consideration what the community
24 members are saying, so that we can sort of better
25 serve our communities, and really represent their

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1 voices, and make sure that their voices are being
2 heard, and that they have proper representation.
3 So thank you. (Applause).

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kenneth
5 Cohen, to be followed by David Goldstein.

6 MR. COHEN: Good evening. My name is Ken
7 Cohen. I am regional director for the NAACP, New
8 York State Conference Metropolitan Council, which
9 is all 14 branches of New York City. Our
10 request, this evening, is very simple. And just
11 hearing the little bit I have heard so far, we
12 are asking that none of these submissions be
13 submitted for next month's hearing.

14 We are concerned that there is a discord in
15 the communities, and there is a difference
16 between the maps that have been presented, and
17 the maps that will reflect the communities, not
18 only in Queens, but across the City. We have
19 heard concerns, from our branches in the Bronx
20 and Brooklyn as well as Queens, as to what is
21 presently being presented.

22 And we ask that, before this goes to the
23 City Council for a vote, that you reconsider all
24 of the proposals and then present a different
25 map. Thank you. (Applause).

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is David
2 Goldstein, to be followed by Mohammed Sadiq.

3 MR. GOLDSTEIN: Good evening, Commissioners.
4 I was shocked. I am David Goldstein. I am the
5 zoning chairman of the Bayside Hills Civic
6 Association. I have to say I was shocked when
7 the ground one maps show Bayside Hills split in
8 half, with the northern half going into
9 District 19 and the southern half going into
10 District 23.

11 Bayside Hills has existed, as a distinct
12 community, since 1936. Proof of this is the
13 existence of the Bayside Hills Civic Association
14 since that time.

15 If the existence, of a civic association,
16 does not define a neighborhood, then what else
17 would?

18 At some point, many years ago, additional
19 single-family homes were added to the area of our
20 association, but we remained an area of
21 single-family homes, on similar-sized plots, with
22 our children attending the same schools, being
23 policed by the same police precinct, attending
24 the same churches, using the same railroad
25 stations and the same post office, and sharing

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1 the same 9/11 memorial.

2 Together, we fought to secure R2A zoning for
3 our area. We continue to function as a cohesive
4 neighborhood, even as our neighborhood has come
5 to include many, many people of different ethnic
6 and religious backgrounds. We are all the same
7 in terms of how we live, what we do, and the
8 principles we live under.

9 Any differences, in the ways residents of
10 Bayside Hills live, based on their ethnicity or
11 country of origin, are tiny, when compared to the
12 similarities, going back, by the history and
13 customs of the area we live in, the common
14 architecture of our homes, and the mutual respect
15 we have for one another.

16 We are sure that you realize that all of
17 Bayside Hills belongs in District 19.
18 Neighborhoods should be seen as areas of historic
19 development, which have been formed by natural
20 boundaries, man-made obstructions and cohesive
21 architecture. I am puzzled by those who want to
22 gerrymander our neighborhoods based on other
23 factors. In fact, our neighborhood is about
24 one-half Asian and one-half non-Asian. There is
25 no way one person could represent everyone.

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1 So the idea that people have to be represented
2 by person of a particular race is an impossible
3 situation. It is ridiculous. Therefore, I urge
4 you, not only on my behalf, but as zoning
5 chairman of the Bayside Hills Civic Association,
6 to adopt the QCC plan, which shows the right
7 zoning for our area and takes care of the whole
8 job of mapping out Queens properly. Thank you.

9 (Applause).

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Mohammed
11 Sadiq, to be followed by Richard Hellenbrecht.

12 MR. SADIQ: Good evening. My name is
13 Mohammed Sadiq and I am with Taking Our Seat.
14 John Albert, of Taking Our Seat, he already
15 explained about our maps. I would like to
16 explain a little bit more about that. Also,
17 thank you for giving me the opportunity to
18 present my testimony. I submitted my testimony
19 in the August redistricting hearing and I
20 testified ten years ago before the 2002
21 Districting Commission.

22 I am asking for the same things that I have
23 always asked for, keeping our neighborhoods
24 together, distinctly. You have the demographic
25 information that I provided earlier at the

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1 previous hearing. The largest communities, of
2 South-Asian Americans, are found in the following
3 neighborhoods: Richmond Hills and South Ozone
4 Park, Briarwood and Jamaica Hills, Jackson
5 Heights and Elmhurst, Bellerose and Floral Park.

6 I will not recount the history of the voter
7 recognition in this areas, because you know that
8 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are broken
9 into four different council districts. Briarwood
10 and Jamaica Hills are broken into three council
11 districts. The Districting Commission's proposed
12 maps gave our community a mixed bag, depending on
13 the neighborhoods. The one place, that the
14 Commission did justice to the community, was in
15 the Bellerose and Floral Park. We support the
16 proposed map for the 23rd District. This
17 district keeps the Bellerose, Floral Park, Glen
18 Oaks and Queens Village together.

19 We also support the unity maps, and, also,
20 in Briarwood and Jamaica Hills, the Commission's
21 proposed maps do an acceptable job for keeping
22 the Bangladeshi together. The Commission's
23 proposed District 24 keeps this neighborhood
24 together, for the most part, but adjustments can
25 be made, to the southern property, to keep it

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1 uniform along the Jamaica Avenue.

2 We have the same problem in Richmond Hill
3 and South Ozone Park, and a lot of people are
4 testifying about that area. This is ongoing.
5 Ongoing from the last ten years. So --
6 (three-minute timer alarms) -- I appreciate it.
7 Please, listen to the unity-map groups and do it.
8 Thank you. (Applause).

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Richard
10 Hellenbrecht, to be followed by Bryan Block.

11 MR. HELLENBRECHT: Good evening, and thank
12 you, very much. The box coming up looks like a
13 Dunkin' Donuts, but it's really not. That is a
14 complete copy of the Queens Civic Congress map,
15 15 copies, one for everybody.

16 Good evening. My name is Rich Hellenbrecht.
17 I am president of the Queens Civic Congress, a
18 member organization comprised of over 1,000 civic
19 and block associations, co-ops and condos, and
20 historic societies throughout the entire borough.
21 We offer assistance and advocacy to our member
22 organizations, several of which have called for
23 significant action in this redesigned proposal,
24 in order to ensure fairness and equity in
25 representation across the borough.

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1 Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress
2 conducted a thorough analysis of the boundaries
3 released by the Districting Commission on
4 September 4th. Several members provided input
5 and detailed information through the process. We
6 find the proposed boundaries are unsatisfactory
7 and do nothing to improve the proper
8 representation of individuals and neighborhoods
9 in our great borough.

10 We have prepared a full set of alternative
11 district boundaries. As you have heard here
12 tonight, several civic groups and community
13 boards have expressed their complete support for
14 the Queens Civics Congress report and proposed
15 district boundaries. The Queens Civic Congress
16 considered several guiding principles, that must
17 be met, in establishing and setting the new City
18 Council districts for our borough.

19 Most important, of course, is the City
20 Charter, Article 52, requiring that each district
21 meet certain population numeric requirements.
22 That is understandable and we respect it. The
23 next-most important thing, to Queens Civic
24 Congress, is that our towns, with their named
25 identities and common-interest areas, remain

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1 intact in one council district.

2 In addition to the areas named, common
3 interests include density, similarity of housing
4 types and zoning, local schools, precincts and
5 customs. Additional guiding principles we
6 considered, included making district boundaries
7 as straight and rational as possible and using
8 natural and man-made barriers where we can. We
9 also take serious consideration of ethnicities,
10 and other demographics, to ensure the continued
11 diversity that Queens is known for.

12 Back in 2003, many civic organizations were
13 seriously disappointed with the district changes
14 in which some areas separated communities into as
15 many as three districts, such as Maspeth and
16 Auburndale. We hope that the Districting
17 Commission will take this opportunity to correct
18 such problems. Unfortunately, we were disturbed
19 to see that even more communities have been,
20 needlessly, separated in the 2012 proposal.

21 As the media noted, the Commission's
22 proposed lines, at first glance, don't look very
23 substantial. But the devil, as always, is in the
24 details. Communities, that have been united for
25 a century or more, including Cambria Heights and

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1 Springfield Gardens, in the north, Bayside Hills,
2 North Flushing and Auburndale, in the north, and
3 the planned community of Mitchell-Linden and
4 Maspeth, further west, all have now been split --
5 (three-minute timer alarms) -- into two or three
6 districts, in the simple move of a line, of a
7 couple of blocks.

8 In many cases, this would make it impossible
9 for areas, like Springfield Gardens, to get
10 strong representation, because civics will need
11 to lobby three different council members. There
12 is more. I thank you, very much, for your time.
13 I don't want to take other people's time. Many
14 people will be talking about the Queens Civic
15 Congress proposal and I hope you take it
16 seriously. Thank you. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
18 Bryan Block, to be followed by Chuck Mohan.

19 MR. BLOCK: Good evening, Commissioners and
20 ladies and gentlemen in the audience. My name is
21 Bryan Block. I am the chair of Community
22 Board 13. I understand what my chair was just
23 speaking about, commonality with regard to
24 various communities. I get this firsthand, as
25 chair of my board, of how the communities would

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1 like to stay together.

2 But I am not here tonight as a chair. I am
3 just letting you know what I hear as chair. But
4 tonight, I am speaking as a resident of Cambria
5 Heights since 1967. I have grown up, since 1967,
6 in Cambria Heights. I am an appointed board
7 member of the Cambria Heights Civic Association.
8 Some of the civic association members are sitting
9 here this evening. I would like to state that I
10 am in opposition, strong opposition, to the
11 proposed lines for the 27th Council District that
12 affects the residents of Cambria Heights.

13 The proposal would have an adverse impact on
14 the community. Now, let's go back several years
15 ago. When the proposed lines, that this
16 Commission is recommending, was the lines that we
17 had ten, 11 years ago, when Council Member
18 Juanita Watkins was in office.

19 At that time, I am not talking about the
20 council member, but it caused confusion, great
21 confusion, for the residents in Cambria Heights,
22 because we didn't know, that you were on one
23 block, you had one council member, then you had
24 Juanita as your council member. It just caused
25 too much confusion.

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1 Now you want to go back to that confusion
2 that we left?

3 No. It's diminishing the voters in the
4 community. It's creating apathy in the
5 community. And the commonality, that my chair
6 just spoke about, of lanyards, you are talking
7 that away. I know the time is going quickly. I
8 just want to stress the commonality of Cambria
9 Heights. Since I have been there since '67, we
10 are one community. Now you want to put us in
11 with the community of Laurelton.

12 It didn't work back in '91 and you want to
13 go back to that?

14 I don't understand your thinking here. I am
15 not using up the time.

16 This proposed map, with that little piece
17 that you are talking about, that you want to cut
18 out, that is political gerrymandering, political
19 gerrymandering that you are looking to do with
20 this one piece. I leave that with you and
21 someone else can use my time. Thank you, very
22 much. (Applause).

23 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Chuck
24 Mohan, to be followed by Kris Gounden.

25 MR. MOHAN: Hi. Good evening. I am a

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1 member of PSC, Professional Staff Congress. I am
2 a union member. I am a community activist and I
3 will not bore you with some of the facts and
4 figures that were presented before by Albert
5 Baldeo, Jerry Vattamala and others, who spoke
6 here, because I do support the unity map.

7 I know Americans believe in equality,
8 liberty and democracy. The present situation, in
9 Richmond Hill, is definitely not what democracy
10 looks like.

11 Okay?

12 The fact is, if you step over, if you are
13 driving on Liberty, east or west, and you cross
14 from one side of Lefferts Boulevard to the other
15 side, the neighborhood doesn't change. The
16 neighborhood needs to be pushed to the Van Wyck.

17 This Commission has a great opportunity to
18 right that wrong, that has been prevalent in that
19 community for many, many years. And as Albert
20 Baldeo said earlier, to the City Council
21 representatives, it seems that our community is
22 looked at as a cash cow for them. And after the
23 election is over, no one gets the services that
24 we deserve, that the people in the community pay
25 taxes, they vote and everything else they

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1 participate in in the civic life of the
2 community.

3 I am urging you that, for too long, this
4 situation has been in effect. I just want to
5 say, to this body, as the great Martin Luther
6 King once said, "Justice delayed is justice
7 denied." Please don't let this continue anymore.
8 Thank you. (Applause).

9 MR. HUM: Mr. Mohan, you mentioned that you
10 support the community map, which indicates
11 Jamaica Avenue as the northern border, but you
12 also said that you wanted to support or advocate
13 for some of the previous speakers, which has
14 Atlantic Avenue as the northern border.

15 Which is it that you prefer?

16 MR. MOHAN: Well, as I said, the unity map
17 is good, but John Albert said, and I understand
18 your position as a Commission, and you are being
19 tugged in all directions. So there's two other
20 maps, I believe, that were by Taking Our Seats,
21 if I am not mistaken, that you can look at. You
22 know we want you to take a close look at, first
23 of all, we want the boundary to go to the Van
24 Wyck. We are pushing for that.

25 However, we understand, again, your

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1 position. Take a good look at the other maps
2 that were presented. That's all we are saying.
3 Thank you. (Applause).

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kris
5 Gounden, to be followed by Aminta Kilawan.

6 MR. GOUNDEN: Good evening, ladies and
7 gentlemen. My name is Kris Gounden. I have been
8 called a community activist, so I guess that's my
9 position now. My testimony is, basically, it
10 does not work, the redistricting does not work,
11 and Ozone Park, Richmond Hill is a community that
12 my family has been in since 1976.

13 We live right off of Lefferts Boulevard. We
14 currently own a house now. It's paid off. We
15 have been victims of redistricting that did not
16 work. The Caribbean, West Indian community has
17 grown in Ozone Park through our will to live
18 together. Because of the shape of the voting
19 district, we cannot vote to elect someone who is
20 born of us.

21 We cannot vote for someone who is more
22 likely to support our own interests. The voting
23 district was a whole before we became a
24 community. This redistricting is, essentially,
25 to divide and weaken us. The Lefferts Boulevard

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1 line is unacceptable. I repeat that one more
2 time. The Lefferts Boulevard line is
3 unacceptable. (Applause).

4 Instead of help, I had to do a lawsuit
5 against my councilman, at the time, Joe DeSalvo,
6 that a Federal judge says I have standing.
7 Current politicians are our enemies.
8 Politicians, police and City agencies have double
9 standards. When we have no representation, this
10 is what happens. This is our fight. We've
11 become our own community activists.

12 We have to write stories, in papers, outside
13 of our community, that will speak of our
14 interests. As a paper now, from Harlem, the
15 Black Storm News, is coming into Ozone Park just
16 for the same reason, that the double standards,
17 that families such as mine, endured.

18 On June 12, 2012, a neighbor of mine, Scott
19 Statland (phonetic), repeatedly called police, on
20 frivolous and false allegations against me and my
21 family, confronted me, when I was driving with my
22 son, who was then five years old.

23 He pushed and cursed me and my son and
24 preposterously claimed my son must be stealing
25 his letters from his mailbox. Knowing the

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1 history of harassment of my family, with the
2 cooperation of the police, the 106th Precinct, I
3 videotaped the incident. Afterwards, I was
4 called to the police, who took no action against
5 Statland. Instead, Statland accused me of
6 assaulting the him.

7 The police, without even getting my story or
8 viewing the videotape, arrested me. A judge
9 granted an order of protection to Statland, when,
10 in fact, I was the victim. Now, as a result, I
11 face a court trial and since my Legal Aid
12 attorney is not interested in my side of the
13 story, and has viewed the tape, I could be
14 convicted of false charges. As a result of the
15 harassment, my wife suffered a miscarriage that
16 week.

17 What kind of justice is that?

18 Is this really the American dream or an
19 American nightmare?

20 I hope there's someone up here, on the
21 panel, who exposes the injustices. I graduated
22 high school down the block, the honors' program
23 (three-minute timer alarms). I have 20 years in
24 as a professional. This is an insult to
25 hardworking, educated people, That you will draw

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1 a line right through the middle of our community.
2 This is intentional, and the current politicians
3 are the ones that are doing this, and I am
4 insulted by it.

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you. We are going
6 to take a brief recess.

7 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

8 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We are going to resume our
9 meeting. If we can have order in the room. Call
10 the next speaker.

11 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
12 Aminta Kilawan, to be followed by Henry Euler.
13 Quiet, please.

14 MS. KILAWAN: Chairman Romano and members of
15 the New York Districting Commission, thanks for
16 the opportunity to testify tonight. I appear
17 before you as the human rights chair of the
18 Global Organization for People of Indian Origin,
19 and as a member of the Shruti -- (inaudible) --
20 in Ozone Park, and as a founder of the
21 progressive Hindu organization called Sadhana,
22 and as the co-president of the North American
23 South-Asian Law Students Association, and as a
24 third-year law student at Fordham Law.

25 But above all these titles, I am most proud

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1 to call myself a United States citizen, the first
2 in my family to be born on New York City soil, to
3 hardworking Indo-Guyanese parents, in the rich
4 and diverse county of Queens. Like many of my
5 fellow South Asian and Indo-Caribbean people, my
6 parents migrated to this country, decades ago,
7 because it's a land of opportunity.

8 Specifically, they migrated to New York
9 City, because of its ability to respect cultures
10 while, simultaneously, promoting unity among all
11 peoples. I am most proud to be a citizen of the
12 United States, because one of its most basic,
13 fundamental tenets is democracy. Namely, a
14 country for the people, by the people.

15 When I was in grammar school, in Ozone Park,
16 I learned about the concept of gerrymandering,
17 and it's safe to say that that is exactly what
18 the current lines propose. Members of the panel,
19 I implore you to listen. Listen, as I explain
20 why certain areas of Richmond Hill, Ozone Park
21 and South Ozone Park must remain a cohesive
22 whole.

23 Listen, as I explain why the existing lines,
24 for City Council Districts 28 and 32, do not make
25 any logical essential. Listen, to why these

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1 lines do not represent democracy. The current
2 lines split one community of interest right down
3 the middle. That community of interest is
4 chopped down Lefferts Boulevard, which, if you
5 visit it, you would see serves as a hub for our
6 community.

7 To its left, you have the Mandir, that I
8 worship in, along with a plethora of other
9 mosques and churches, as my fellow community
10 members have testified to today. In the middle,
11 you have got the public transportation, that I
12 have used for as long as I was allowed to use
13 public transportation. There is the A train, and
14 the Q10 and the Q37 bus lines, which most of my
15 community members also utilize.

16 To the right, you have got Richmond Hill
17 High School, John Adams High School, where most
18 of our young people attend. And all around us,
19 you have got a myriad of small businesses, run by
20 our entrepreneurial people, allowing local
21 markets to thrive. These businesses include Roti
22 shops, bakeries, West Indian supply stores,
23 boutiques and traditional Indian attire, et
24 cetera, et cetera.

25 Now, it's my hope that you recognize this

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1 community of interest and go back to the drawing
2 board. Serve democracy and readjust those unjust
3 lines (three-minute timer alarms). Thank you.

4 (Applause).

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
6 Henry Euler, followed by Armando Cortino.

7 MR. EULER: My name is Henry Euler. I am
8 first vice president of the Auburndale
9 Improvement Association. We have over 600
10 members and we have been in existence for over
11 100 years. I come, today, to speak to you about
12 the Districting Commission's proposed lines.

13 We were kind of upset with the lines, so we
14 went to the Queens Civic Congress to express our
15 thoughts about it. Other civic associations also
16 went to the Queens Civic Congress, and what they
17 did was they set up a proposal of their own
18 lines. They had a study done and we find these
19 new lines, that they are proposing, excellent.

20 We are very happy that the community of
21 North Flushing will be placed in the 19th
22 District under the QCC proposal. It's made up of
23 one- and two-family homes. It should be in the
24 19th. Not the 20th. The 20th is made up,
25 mostly, of high-rise apartments and very

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1 densely-populated areas and downtown Flushing.
2 It doesn't match the same needs and concerns of
3 the people living in North Flushing have. It
4 should go to the 19th District.

5 We also feel that Mitchell-Linden should be
6 kept in the 20th District. We are very happy to
7 see that more parts of Auburndale, under the QCC
8 plan, will be in the 19th District. We are also
9 happy that Bayside Hills has been united in the
10 19th District under the QCC plan. We have one
11 further request, of the Commission, for your
12 consideration. We would like you to take a look
13 at the portion of Auburndale that's in the 20th
14 Council District right now.

15 Tonight, we heard a lot of people complain
16 about the fact that their neighborhoods were
17 divided into two. My neighborhood, of Auburndale
18 and Western Bayside, was split into three council
19 districts. Now, the part of Auburndale, that's
20 in the 20th District, is bounded by these
21 boundary lines, 47th and 46th Avenue on the
22 north, Francis Lewis Boulevard on the east, the
23 Long Island Expressway on the south and Utopia
24 Parkway on the west.

25 This portion is in the 20th District. We

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1 feel it should be either to the 19th or 23rd
2 District. I have spoken, to some of the
3 residents there, and they feel it should be in
4 the 19th. They have more of a connection to the
5 19th than the 23rd. We, also, were considering
6 extending the boundary a little even further to
7 the west, to 162nd Street, because that's where
8 our civic boundary ends.

9 So we hope that the Commission will look at
10 the Queen Civics Congress plan and support that,
11 and, also, take a look at that portion of
12 Auburndale, that's in the 20th right now, and we
13 move it can be moved to another district, where
14 it has similar interests with one- and two-family
15 homes and the same type of zoning, R2A. Thank
16 you, very much. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Armando
18 Cortino, to be followed by Vishnu Mahadeo.

19 MR. CORTINO: Hello, everyone, and thank you
20 for allowing me the opportunity to provide
21 testimony. I am here on behalf of the Bayside
22 Hills Civic Association. I am their vice
23 president. Dear Districting Committee, I have
24 reviewed the new redistricting map, as currently
25 proposed. As the vice president of the Bayside

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1 Hills Civic Association, I strongly oppose it.

2 Under the new proposal, Bayside Hills would
3 be broken up and sliced in half, becoming two
4 separates districts, 19 and 23. Splitting up
5 communities is unfair and directly impacts its
6 ability to prosper. Not keeping communities
7 whole makes it difficult to service its needs. A
8 community should be judged and addressed as a
9 whole. Not as the sum of two parts with
10 different sets of rules, rights, representatives
11 and officials.

12 I realize that the Committee has worked very
13 hard and must have taken much into consideration
14 before arriving at this current proposal.
15 However, breaking and splitting up communities,
16 for any reason, should not be done simply by
17 redrawing a few lines on a map. Today's actions
18 directly affect tomorrow's future. The proposed
19 redistricting would have an obvious detrimental
20 effect on Bayside Hills and communities like it.

21 It is not my intention to come here and
22 complain, but to encourage open communication
23 between all parties involved, in order to yield
24 positive results. I hope that the Committee --
25 excuse me -- the Committee is receptive to

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1 suggestions and ideas that may lead to
2 accomplishing the redistricting objective, while,
3 optimally, still serving the communities it
4 directly affects.

5 The Queens Civic Congress, which represents
6 all civic associations in Queens County, has
7 reviewed the Committee's current proposed plan.
8 They have developed and proposed a new plan that
9 makes a lot more sense. Their plan proposes
10 different boundaries for the borough, including
11 breaking the borough into districts of proper
12 size, while still recognizing the needs of other
13 areas as well.

14 The QCC's proposal is more of a full plan,
15 that solves the entire problem for all districts
16 in the entire borough of Queens. It satisfies
17 the goal of redistricting, while still being
18 sensitive to the communities affected by the
19 redistricting. This plan, surely, deserves your
20 serious consideration.

21 In conclusion, just a little bit about
22 Bayside Hills. It's an active community, that is
23 composed of over 1,200, mostly, single-family
24 homes. Since 1936, it has been represented by
25 its own civic association. Together, they have

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1 successfully tackled many homeowner issues, such
2 as area beautification, flooding, overdevelopment
3 and now redistricting. Yet, we still find time
4 to gather at things, such as our 9/11 ceremony,
5 and memorial ceremonies, and holiday-lighting
6 ceremonies, et cetera.

7 Splitting up Bayside Hills would destroy the
8 unique cohesiveness that it
9 possesses (three-minute timer alarms). Every
10 community here wants the same thing, to be united
11 and to stick together. In order to enjoy success
12 and prosperity, every community should be allowed
13 to be part of one town, one neighborhood, one
14 community and one district with one voice.

15 I urge the Committee to take all of the
16 submitted proposals under careful consideration,
17 including the QCC's, and the mission here should
18 be to unite communities. Not divide them. Thank
19 you all. (Applause).

20 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Vishnu
21 Mahadeo, to be followed by Darrel Sukhdeo.

22 MR. MAHADEO: Good afternoon, or good
23 evening, all. I actually have written testimony
24 here that I am going to actually submit this
25 rather than reading it. So I would like someone

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1 to take it. I have a copy for everyone here.
2 However, I would like to use the balance of my
3 time to talk about what you guys have sent, the
4 message you have sent to us.

5 We have made a significant presentation,
6 that you choose to ignore us, completely ignore
7 everything we have said. We have testimony. We
8 have statements. We have maps. We have
9 demographics. We have legal presentations.

10 What do you need as an option, for us to
11 take you to court and challenge you?

12 Why are you ignoring us, when you have a
13 public forum?

14 We are asking, and are giving you, just
15 occasion to keep the Richmond Hill community
16 whole. We have come to a point where we deserve
17 to be recognized. We are asking for you to do
18 what is right. We are begging you. We are
19 cajoling you.

20 What else do we have to do?

21 You choose to ignore us on your first
22 release. Please, do what is right. Make us feel
23 as though you are doing what you are asked to do.

24 You are an independent Commission, whose job
25 is to be making decisions without political

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1 compromise. Make us feel proud of you. We want
2 to be proud of you. I am not here to give you
3 all the details. The details, we have done,
4 repeatedly, through many presentations. Today, I
5 am asking and I am appealing to your better
6 judgment. We are looking to be, finally,
7 recognized as a people.

8 We, my community, has been compromised, lack
9 of funding, from the discretionary funding, from
10 every one of the City Councils. We have not been
11 getting our fair share of assembly funding. Nor
12 that of the State Senate. The congressional
13 office have completely ignored us. Richmond Hill
14 has two of the worst high schools in all of
15 Queens.

16 What else do we have to do?

17 Both schools have over two to 300 percent
18 overcrowding. Yet, you guys are treating us as
19 though we are stepchild. We are not significant.
20 I am asking, please, do what is right. We need
21 your support. We want to work with you. We come
22 out here, in large numbers, with maps, T-shirts,
23 placards.

24 What else do we have to do?

25 We are asking, please work with us. Thank

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1 you. (Applause).

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
3 Darrel Sukhdeo, to be followed by Sati Gurdial.

4 MR. SUKHDEO: Good afternoon. I am Darrel
5 Sukhdeo, a community activist representing South
6 Queens and South Asian and Asian voters. I
7 spoke, on behalf of several organizations, that
8 have worked tirelessly to bring our registered
9 voters. By a conservative estimate, 60,000
10 residents of South Queens, particularly Richmond
11 Hill and South Ozone Park. We also reach 200,000
12 of all South Asians in New York City.

13 To name a few of the groups I work with, it
14 includes the Ruskin Arts Center, AALDEF, from
15 whom you have heard today, the Indo-Caribbean
16 Alliance, the Richmond Hill Economic Development
17 Corporation, the American Cancer Society, Eastern
18 Division, and the National Cancer Action Network,
19 the Asian-American/Asian Research Institute of
20 CUNY, the City University of New York, the South
21 Asian Journalists Association, among many more.

22 Since 1998, I have worked, long and hard, to
23 advocate for a single district for Richmond Hill,
24 South Ozone Park. Along the way, have been many
25 politicians, but despite a multitude of promises,

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1 no effort has been made to help this community.
2 And it seems, once again, that you have
3 disregarded and disenfranchised us. As a
4 so-called model minority, we owe more and pay
5 more taxes than the average New York City
6 household.

7 We have hired more employees, across most
8 industries in New York City, including all
9 employers in the tech sector. I am speaking of
10 the Asian community. We have hired more
11 employees, across most industries in New York
12 City, I repeat, including all employers in the
13 tech sector. Yet, we do not have a single South
14 Asian on the New York City Council, because of
15 the legacy of dividing our vote and the agenda,
16 by many, to disenfranchise our community.

17 Are you, the members of this Committee, part
18 of that legacy?

19 It seems, from your proposed map, that you
20 intend to perpetuate this not-so-hidden policy of
21 deliberate disenfranchisement. This time, I am
22 asking the 200,000 New York City residents, that
23 we reach, not to give money to any political
24 parties and only to give to South Asian and Asian
25 candidates directly. Not to believe promises

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1 that have been proven to be all empty promises,
2 and to send a message that it's not okay to
3 continue with this castigation, by withholding
4 all funding to political parties.

5 You have received our proposed maps, and,
6 particularly, the new proposed district for
7 Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park from AALDEF. I
8 think AALDEF is the only organization that has
9 presented a map that unifies all minority
10 communities, and in addition to that, continues
11 to look at the legacy communities of New York
12 City. No other organizations have done that.

13 I think it's fair, it's unbiased and it's
14 equity for all, and I think the community should
15 adopt the entire AALDEF map. (Three-minute timer
16 alarms.) We are a significant part of the fabric
17 of New York City. Not just a model minority with
18 salaries, math and science, but with civic
19 engagement, political activism and policies. We
20 continue to make massive impacts on New York
21 City.

22 It is more than past the time that we have
23 fair district lines. I am calling, on each of
24 you, to help us, and I promise that I will ask
25 our communities to contribute to your next

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1 campaigns. Thank you. (Laughter). (Applause).

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
3 Sati Gurdial, to be followed by Harry Lauture.

4 MS. GURDIAL: Good evening, Commissioners.
5 My name is Sati Gurdial. Thank you for the
6 opportunity to speak tonight. I have been a
7 community activist in the Richmond Hill, Ozone
8 Park area for over 20 years. I have actually
9 been involved with many of the religious
10 organizations along Liberty Avenue, particularly.
11 I am here, tonight, to support a proposal to
12 extend the line, for District 32, from Lefferts
13 Boulevard to the Van Wyck Expressway.

14 Currently, this area is in District 28 and
15 we are asking for it to be extended to
16 District 32. This will greatly improve our
17 political representation, for the residents of
18 that area, to keep Richmond Hill as a whole. You
19 have heard previous speakers emphasizing the
20 importance to discontinue the split in the
21 neighborhood. I plead, to you, to recognize the
22 needs of the residents of the Richmond Hill
23 community and extend the lines from Lefferts
24 Boulevard, to the east, and the Van Wyck
25 Expressway. Thank you for your attention on this

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1 important issue. (Applause).

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Harry
3 Lauture, to be followed by Gregory -- and I have
4 trouble reading the writing here -- Guercin.

5 MR. LAUTURE: Okay. Good evening, members
6 of the Commission. My name is Harry Lauture and
7 I am a resident, a long-time resident, of Cambria
8 Heights. It's District 27. I don't have a
9 prepared speech. I will speak from my heart. I
10 was very disappointed to see what you have
11 proposed regarding our community. Our
12 communities consist of long-time retirees and a
13 mixture of young families. And in the past ten
14 years, we have done a lot of things in
15 one district, improving our services in the
16 community.

17 And under the proposed plan, that may
18 reverse the changes we have done and opportunity
19 we have to empower the residents of our
20 community. I implore everyone, on the
21 Commission, to reconsider dividing our community.
22 And just keep in mind, that dividing our
23 community, would have less representation for
24 both the members and the residents of our
25 community. So, please, be aware that the

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1 changes, you make today, will affect our goals
2 and other ideas we might have for the future.
3 Thank you for your time. (Applause).

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Gregory
5 Guercin, to be followed by Dr. Bobby Tiwari.

6 MR. GUERCIN: Hello. My name is Gary
7 Guercin. I am just here, as a resident, to voice
8 my opposition to the redistricting of my
9 neighborhood. I have been a resident of Cambria
10 Heights since 1986. We are a cohesive, small
11 community. I see no true purpose in the
12 redrawing of our district lines. I don't see
13 what purpose it serves in dividing the community.
14 I am here to implore that you reconsider this
15 decision and not divide our community. That's
16 all. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is
18 Dr. Bobby Tiwari, to be followed by Clyde Vanel.

19 DR. TIWARI: Honorable ladies and gentlemen
20 of this distinguished Committee, staff and the
21 administration of LaGuardia College, our college
22 has been very close to me. Twenty-nine years
23 ago, I was a security officer here. Today, I am
24 a research scientist and M.D. (Applause). I am
25 very proud to come back here today. Yes. As

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1 many speakers have said, Richmond Hill -- first
2 of all, let me say, America gave us a lot of
3 things, but one thing is its freedom of
4 expression and democracy. We must choose what is
5 good for us. And we, in Richmond Hill, want a
6 cohesive brotherhood/sisterhood relationship, and
7 that cannot be attained by splitting us up.

8 Our religious organization, our political
9 organization, our economic organization all start
10 in Richmond Hill. If you were to split us up, we
11 will feel disempowered.

12 Where would that put us?

13 We are disenfranchised. It will leave us a
14 very unhappy community.

15 And when people are unhappy, what happens?

16 We have a ruckus in the society. We don't
17 want that.

18 We, Richmond Hill, are very peaceful. Yes,
19 there are spates of problems, as any society.
20 But we must be pragmatic. We must not go in this
21 view of redemarcation of the City lines or the
22 borough lines in a blinking (sic) way. No. If
23 we do that, we are becoming undemocratic,
24 un-American. No. I am proud of America and I am
25 proud of having this community to listen to us.

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1 All I am asking is, members of this
2 honorable Committee, lean back, take a deep
3 breath and think, if you divide us, what will
4 happen to us?

5 You don't have to divide us. It's like
6 you're eating steak outside and I am a vegetarian
7 inside. No. We don't want that. We want to be
8 in our community. I live in a system, formerly,
9 the British divided and ruled us. And what I am
10 see from this redemarcation, is that the
11 potential meaning is to divide and rule us.

12 No. We are here as Americans. America has
13 been great to us, to all my sisters and brothers
14 here. We want a cohesive, united and a fair
15 crack of the whip. And it only will come, by you
16 members of this honorable Committee, to take that
17 and say, Yes, let us give the Richmond Hill
18 people their block and their share of the crack
19 of the whip.

20 That's what I am asking you. Ladies and
21 gentlemen of this honorable Committee, please
22 don't have a blinker on your eyes. We are not on
23 that race track (three-minute timer alarms). We
24 are here, our sisters and brothers, all. Thank
25 you, all, very much. (Applause).

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Clyde
2 Vanel, to be followed by Robert and Stacey Myers.

3 MR. VANEL: Good evening, Commissioners.
4 Good evening, members of the audience. My name
5 is Clyde Vanel. I am an attorney, a community
6 advocate and a resident, a long-time resident, of
7 Cambria Heights. Today, I am going to talk to
8 you about making sure that we urge you to keep
9 Cambria Heights together and contiguous.

10 Now, there are arguments that districting is
11 based on the law, and the New York City
12 Commission -- sorry. The New York City Charter.
13 Under the New York City Charter, Section 52,
14 Subsection 1C, it states: "The district lines
15 shall be kept intact, neighborhoods and
16 communities, with established ties of common
17 interest and association, with a historical,
18 racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other."

19 We urge that the community, the Cambria
20 Heights community, stay together. In fact, we
21 stand here together with many of the Cambria
22 Heights residents, if the Cambria Heights
23 residents will stand up. (Applause).

24 Now, very important for us is to -- we are
25 here to urge that the Commission really consider

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1 the proposed lines that were put in this
2 proposal. On the proposed lines, the eastbound
3 border is really drawn on 119th Avenue, in fact,
4 where it used to be a straight line down 121st
5 Avenue, to the top going, all the way down to
6 Francis Lewis. We propose, that line, to be
7 drawn back for that border, to be 121st Avenue.

8 All the homes to the east of 121st Avenue,
9 that whole neighborhood is Cambria Heights. So
10 there is no rhyme or reason for us to have that
11 zigzag toward the end of that border of the
12 district. So we urge you, we strongly urge the
13 Commissioners to reconsider that border and to
14 make the border, on the eastbound of the
15 district, a straight line of 121st Avenue. Thank
16 you. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Stacey
18 Myers, to be followed by Mazeola Uddin.

19 MS. MYERS: Yes. Good evening and I am glad
20 to have the opportunity to speak with you. I am
21 here to voice my opposition to the proposed
22 redistricting of Cambria Heights. The community
23 is an intact neighborhood with established ties
24 of common interest and association. The
25 geographic integrity of this community has been

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1 preserved by the July 27, 2005, New York City
2 Department of City Planning's adoption of the
3 Lower Density Zoning Initiative, which maintains
4 the prevailing character of the neighborhood, and
5 ensures that new residential development reflects
6 the scale of the existing housing mix.

7 Likewise, the political integrity of this
8 community must be preserved, by keeping the
9 entire community within the 27th Council
10 District, comprised of middle class, tax-paying
11 homeowners, who have a vested interest and stake
12 in the integrity of this community. Our current
13 districting ensures fair and effective
14 representation. This family-oriented community
15 has worked hard to maintain its qualities of life
16 and property values.

17 The proposed redistricting undermines our
18 ability to hold one political official
19 accountable, thereby, weakening our political
20 effectiveness and, ultimately, compromising our
21 community's health, safety and welfare. Clearly,
22 the proposed redistricting plan draws an
23 artificial line to separate an otherwise intact
24 community and flies in the face of true
25 democracy.

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1 While the rationale for this proposed
2 redistricting results from the 2010 Census,
3 noting a population decrease, it's puzzling why
4 there would be any discussion of splitting a
5 community with fewer people into two council
6 districts. It stands to reason that Cambria
7 Heights is best served by one council member. As
8 the New York City Districting Commission is
9 charged with making recommendations regarding the
10 proposed redistricting plan, we believe that it
11 is in the best interest, of our community, to
12 remain one district with one council member.

13 We believe that your rejection of the
14 proposed redistricting plan, for Cambria Heights,
15 best represents the residents' interests, as well
16 as of those who share our values, interests and
17 vision. Your support, of the Cambria Heights
18 community, is most appreciated. (Applause).

19 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Mazeola
20 Uddin, to be followed by Mary Vavruska.

21 MS. UDDIN: Hello. Good evening
22 Commissioners and all of my distinguished
23 community members. My name is Mazeola Uddin. I
24 am the Alliance of South Asian American Labor
25 organization coordinator. Dear Commissioners,

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1 the Alliance of South Asian American Labor is a
2 community-based organization founded and led by
3 South-Asian-Americans, from the trade-unionized
4 movement, who seek to share our experience in
5 politics and leverage unions to create a more
6 dynamic culture of civic participation in the
7 wider South-Asian-American community.

8 We are a membership-based organization with
9 chapters in Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and
10 Manhattan. We are very disappointed in the
11 proposed council district map of Queens. The
12 neighborhoods of Richmond Hill and South Ozone
13 Park continue to be divided by multiple council
14 districts and this is unacceptable.

15 This Commission heard from several community
16 members, at the last hearing, on the importance
17 of keeping this community united. However, it
18 still proposed a map, which continues this unfair
19 treatment of a largely immigrant and minority
20 community. There is one here, in the South Ozone
21 Park section of Queens, that has one of the
22 densest concentrations of South-Asian-Americans
23 in the country.

24 The community of interest must be united and
25 a population will have its own district. It is

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1 time that this community is united and its
2 interests better served in the City Council. We
3 demand that you keep our community united and do
4 your duties, under the Charter of the City of New
5 York, to visit communities of interest. Thank
6 you. (Applause).

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Mary
8 Vavruska, to be followed by Doris Bodine.

9 MS. VAVRUSKA: Good evening, honorable
10 members of the New York City Districting
11 Commission. Thank you for coming to Queens
12 County to hear our concerns. My name is Mary
13 Vavruska. I reside at 34-10 94th Street, in
14 Jackson Heights, Queens, in the Brulene co-op
15 apartments, and I am president of the Brulene
16 Cooperative.

17 Adjacent to the Brulene Cooperative is
18 Southridge Section 1, 2, 3 and 4 cooperative
19 apartments, and Northridge Section 1, 2 and 3
20 cooperative apartments. These cooperative
21 apartments were developed, in the early 1950s,
22 under the Section 13 Federal housing legislation.
23 Throughout this half century, we have worked
24 together on issues that affected our building
25 maintenance and our quality of life.

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1 Our proudest achievement, in these years, is
2 our NORC, Naturally Occurring Retirement
3 Communities, established in 1999. It is
4 significant that eight separate cooperative
5 corporations worked to create this NORC and have
6 supported it through service and financial
7 commitments. This effort clearly establishes us
8 as a community within the Jackson Heights
9 community.

10 One of the objectives of redistricting is to
11 assure that populations, with a commonality of
12 interest, are located within the same council
13 district. Our objective is to provide services,
14 through NORC, for an aging population, so they
15 can continue to enjoy the quality of life that
16 our cooperative community provides.

17 We believe this can best be accomplished
18 with all eight cooperatives being included in the
19 25th Council District. We ask that the
20 25th Council District include the Brulene
21 Cooperative, Southridge Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4
22 cooperatives, and the Northridge 1, 2 and 3
23 cooperatives. Thank you, very much, for your
24 attention. (Applause).

25 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Doris

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1 Bodine, to be followed by Thomas Ryan.

2 MS. BODINE: Good evening, honorable members
3 of the Commission. I am Doris Bodine and I am
4 the treasurer of the Cambria Heights Civic
5 Association. Our civic association is over 80
6 years old and we represent the Cambria Heights
7 community, the contiguous ZIP code of 11411. We
8 are a very active association, and we count on
9 the support of our elected officials to make sure
10 that the services, that we need, are delivered.

11 And we have a very close and productive
12 working relationship with those elected
13 officials. So to split Cambria Heights, so that
14 it's represented by two councilmen, would really
15 be problematic, and it would cause a decline in
16 the quality of life and the delivery of services.

17 One other thing I would like to mention is
18 the 2005 rezoning of Cambria Heights. I worked
19 on that committee, as a member of the civic, and
20 I went to all of the meetings. We went through,
21 block by block, just to make sure that we
22 maintained the character of Cambria Heights.
23 It's mostly R2A, one- and a few two-family homes,
24 and we worked very well together, and it really
25 is counterproductive to take that chunk out.

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1 I mean when I looked at the map, I thought,
2 maybe, somebody released a little Pac-Man and
3 took a little chunk out, because to see that
4 little bite going to another district, really
5 didn't make sense. So I would like to echo the
6 sentiments of the other residents of Cambria
7 Heights, that have come here, to oppose any
8 redrawing of the district lines and leave it at
9 121st Avenue. Thank you, very much, for your
10 time and attention. (Applause).

11 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Thomas
12 Ryan, to be followed by Dhanasar Singh.

13 MR. RYAN: Good evening, ladies and
14 gentlemen of the Commission. My name is Tom
15 Ryan. I am from Woodside, Queens. I represent
16 the Northern Woodside Coalition. I am here to
17 talk about Woodside, which is, basically, if you
18 look at the colored map behind you, that little,
19 green triangle between Districts 26 and 25. I am
20 referring to, in my speech tonight, to that one
21 little area. Basically, that area has been
22 taken, from 26 to 22, going to the Astoria
23 district.

24 And what disturbs me is, basically,
25 according to your data here, in Astoria, the

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1 deviation is 15,000 people, almost nine percent.
2 If you go to Zagat's or Time Out, Astoria is one
3 of the happening places and a hotspot. The fact
4 that we are going to be misrepresented from
5 Woodside and going to Astoria is unacceptable.
6 Basically, Woodside is a town. Everybody knows
7 Woodside. It has its own ZIP code. It has its
8 own Long Island Rail Road station. There are
9 cemeteries, railroads, and, basically, it has an
10 Irish pub, that everyone knows about.

11 We are ethnically and religiously diverse.
12 We all get along with all the confidence of
13 America. My problem, I think, is the Census
14 data. We seen that before. To say that Astoria
15 has gone down eight percent, 15,000 people, and
16 Woodside has gone up, is sort of ridiculous. I
17 would suggest, maybe, using United States Postal
18 Service ZIP code information, also the housing
19 information, to make a better determination.

20 Basically, what I am looking to do, is that
21 little triangle of land, that separates 22, 26
22 and 25, that little, green smudge, I would like
23 to have that area put back where it belongs.
24 It's now in Council District 26. So I ask you to
25 make a little tweak, of the map, and put us back

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1 where we belong. Thank you. (Applause).

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Dhanasar
3 Singh, to be followed by Ali Najmi.

4 MR. SINGH: My friends, let me thank all of
5 us for being here this splendid evening, this
6 particular day. I have come here and I have been
7 hearing cries. I come so that these cries can no
8 longer be. I come so that the deal can be
9 sealed. When I hear that the world is being
10 chopped, I totally am not in agreement. I do not
11 like for our communities, which were standing
12 tall, and doing very good, and remain wonderful,
13 that it be chopped.

14 I represent, right now, the Richmond
15 Hill/Ozone Park area. The maps, I ask that the
16 fundamental does not become disturbed, lest there
17 will be more and more cries. I ask that the
18 members, whom are in charge, this Committee, that
19 they do know the proper usage of the word. If
20 you move on and make chops and cuts in it, you
21 will hear cries. I come so that these cries can
22 be stopped. Let us unite. Let us keep our
23 community together and I ask for no more. Thank
24 you. (Applause).

25 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Ali

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1 Najmi, to be followed by Kelli Singleton.

2 MR. NAJMI: Thank you. My name is Ali
3 Najmi. I am representing a community-based
4 organization called SEVA. We are Queenswide with
5 a particular interest in the Richmond Hill and
6 South Ozone Park community. I want to echo the
7 concerns, raised by everyone in the audience, for
8 Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, which is
9 presently gerrymandered by four council
10 districts. And under your proposed map, it
11 continues to be gerrymandered by multiple council
12 districts.

13 I want to remind you, that in the last
14 hearing, in my testimony, I presented a question
15 to you and to the audience, which was
16 questioning, essentially, the Commission's
17 integrity, independence, thoughtfulness,
18 sincerity, and the commitment to the Charter, and
19 the commitment to the community. I questioned,
20 all these things, about the Commission.

21 And I left you saying that the true test,
22 and the true measure, and the real answer to all
23 these questions, would be best measured by how
24 this Commission treats Richmond Hill and South
25 Ozone Park. And under your proposed plan,

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1 unfortunately, we have the answer. The answer is
2 you are completely insincere. You could care
3 less about the community. You may or may not
4 understand the Charter, and, frankly, you don't
5 give a damn about Richmond Hill and South Ozone
6 Park, and it's a failure of you in your duties.

7 I urge you to do what we are asking. It's
8 very possible. There are 160,000 people in this
9 area. The boundaries are natural boundaries.
10 Many of them have already been suggested to you.
11 You know what they are. It's very detailed and
12 you still didn't do it. You still didn't do it.

13 Do we have to have the same dog-and-pony
14 show at the third hearing?

15 I hope not. (Applause).

16 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kelli
17 Singleton, to be followed by Beverly Eugene.

18 MS. SINGLETON: Good evening, everyone,
19 members of the Commission, and all guests. My
20 name is Kelli Singleton, as was stated. I am the
21 immediate, past president and chairman of the
22 board of the Cambria Heights Civic Association.
23 As you've heard my colleagues say, we are one of
24 the oldest and most active civic associations in
25 the nation, with 80 years of existence and over

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1 500 members, many of whom are here this evening.

2 I wrote a letter, on behalf of the civic
3 association, addressed to Mr. Benito Romano. I
4 have four copies of the letter, here, which I
5 will pass to you, after expressing our sentiment
6 as regarding the districting proposal for
7 Councils 27 and 31, within Cambria Heights, and
8 it reads as follows:

9 "The purpose, of the letter, is to provide
10 our response to your proposal to alter council
11 district boundaries within Cambria Heights. Our
12 community continues to face many challenges
13 pertaining to zoning and the illegal usage of
14 land. While we have successfully managed to
15 maintain the low-density character of the
16 community," as you've heard earlier, "this was
17 through the help of our local elected officials."

18 "We are still quite concerned about the
19 possibility of us not receiving fair
20 representation, regarding these and other
21 matters, should our district lines be separated.
22 We are stronger together than we are apart."

23 "It is for this reason, that our civic
24 association is strongly opposed to the proposal,
25 that has been presented by the Districting

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1 Commission, to expand sections of Cambria Heights
2 into District 31. As a valued member of the
3 Queens Civic Congress, we are in agreement with
4 their proposal to keep the district lines drawn
5 as is for the Cambria Heights community."

6 "As an alternative, however, we are amenable
7 to having the lines redrawn to expand District
8 Council 27 across Francis Lewis Boulevard, so
9 that our fellow, Cambria Heights, in that
10 vicinity, can be joined with the rest of the
11 community. We thank you for your consideration
12 regarding this important matter." Thank you.

13 (Applause).

14 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Beverly
15 Eugene, to be followed by Murray Berger.

16 MS. EUGENE: Good evening. First of all, I
17 want to thank you for allowing me some time to
18 speak. My name is Beverly Eugene, and I live in
19 the community of Cambria Heights, and have been
20 living there since 1973. I am speaking on
21 behalf, and raising my voice with, the rest of
22 your audience. I, personally, am offended and
23 oppose, venomously, as well as the rest of my
24 community in Cambria Heights, this division.

25 I heard, a long time ago, there was a

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1 saying, Together we stand. Divided we fall. I
2 don't know if anybody, on this panel, ever heard
3 that. But let me tell you why I moved to Cambria
4 Heights, and why I object, venomously, to this
5 splitting of the districts.

6 Okay?

7 On television, in 1973, it said, "Strong,
8 stable" -- I am using the words verbatim --
9 "stable, black community."

10 In Africa, as a black, African woman, we
11 have a saying, and there's a bird called the
12 sankofa bird. You have to know where you came
13 from to know where you are going. Cambria
14 Heights, to me and to my Cambria Heights
15 neighbors and family, represents security,
16 family. That's what it means to me.

17 I am 70 years old. My children are 52.
18 They have gone to school there. They played.
19 There's a sense of pride. We take care of our
20 community and we don't want the divide.

21 What good is it and what motive is that?

22 What is the reason?

23 What is the underlying reason?

24 What good will it serve?

25 If something is stable, and safe, and

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1 secure, and family, and pride, how can you change
2 that?

3 How will your change -- how will your change
4 really affect it?

5 I'm sorry, gentlemen, please, no pun
6 intended, I'm not trying to insult anybody, but
7 it's not politically correct. I smell a rat.
8 Not a mouse. (Laughter). I object and I am
9 going to tell you right now -- (applause) -- I
10 will join -- I will join forces and I will not go
11 down on my knees. I will stand on my feet,
12 because I have enjoyed living with my neighbors
13 and my family. I don't see to seek change,
14 because it can't change, and be any better or
15 more beautiful, than it is.

16 And so I ask you to ponder, look within
17 yourselves, ask yourselves -- (three-minute timer
18 alarms) -- why?

19 What is the real reason?

20 Why?

21 Maybe you need to address that?

22 But I am going to relinquish this mic, right
23 now, okay, just to let you know I exemplify
24 everybody in this room. (Applause). Everybody.
25 I will thank you, Richmond, to my last. I will

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1 walk the streets. I will do whatever it takes,
2 so that we can remain in our communities that we
3 are happy in.

4 Is that too much to ask?

5 Ask yourself, would you like to remain in
6 yours?

7 Would you like a lot of change, and
8 differences, and dividing, and divisions?

9 You have to know, okay, what this means to
10 us. We take pride. And if anybody hasn't really
11 walked through Cambria Heights, since 1973, it's
12 39 years for me, it's beautiful and peaceful.

13 (Applause).

14 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

15 MS. EUGENE: We pay taxes.

16 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

17 MS. EUGENE: Thank you, very much.

18 (Applause).

19 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

20 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Gerry
21 Duke, to be followed by Murray Berger.

22 Do we have a Gerry Duke?

23 Murray Berger?

24 Murray Berger, to be followed by Kendra
25 Pearson.

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1 MS. BURGER: Good evening, gentlemen and
2 ladies on the Commission. I think I am in the
3 right auditorium. When Dominick Pistone, the
4 president of the Kew Gardens Civic Association
5 and I, appeared at the first hearing, it was to
6 ask you to correct a longstanding wrong, where a
7 tip of Kew Gardens, the southwestern tip, which
8 Commissioner Ognibene must be familiar with, has
9 long been separated from the bulk of Kew Gardens.

10 I am here tonight, unlike some of my
11 colleagues here, to say thank you for listening
12 and for correcting that minor wrong. For the
13 first time, in my memory, and I thank you very
14 much, for over 50 years, we have had one council.
15 We will have one council person representing all
16 of Kew Gardens. It's very fitting, because for
17 the first time, we also have one Congressperson
18 representing Kew Gardens. We are still honored
19 by three Senators and two assemblymen.

20 But I am here to thank you and to hope that,
21 as you fine-tune the rest of the map, for the
22 rest of the borough, that you keep Kew Gardens
23 intact and rectify some of the problems that have
24 been raised here tonight. Thank you again.

25 (Applause).

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kendra
2 Pearson, to be followed by our last registered
3 speaker, Eric Curry, Sr.

4 MS. PEARSON: Good evening. I just received
5 the notice, in the mailbox, today, in the
6 afternoon. I happy to be a nurse that works at
7 nighttime. So when you guys are sleeping, in
8 your beds, I am just coming home.

9 The reason why I am here, is to just let you
10 know, that if you do divide Cambria Heights, we
11 are -- currently, there's a fight for the land.
12 Things are being done illegally in our area, and
13 if you separate us, we cannot fight cohesively in
14 our community like we are supposed to.

15 Okay?

16 Another thing is, if you move us in the
17 district that you want us to, we will not be
18 represented properly. We already have a district
19 person that is representing us properly. To that
20 effect, in addition to what Mother Beverly said
21 over there, okay, there is always a hidden agenda
22 somewhere.

23 Okay?

24 We are just asking to keep Cambria Heights
25 together. Otherwise, we will have to object to

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1 all the divisions that you are trying to make in
2 Cambria Heights. Good evening. (Applause).

3 MS. BRAGG: Excuse me, the boundary you are
4 requesting is to be back to 121st Street?

5 Is that the only boundary?

6 I heard someone say Francis Lewis Boulevard.

7 What is the request?

8 MS. PEARSON: The request is just to keep
9 Cambria Heights together. You are trying to
10 divide it into two.

11 MS. BRAGG: I understand that.

12 You want to put the border back to 121st
13 Street?

14 MS. PEARSON: Yes, I believe, put the border
15 back the way it was.

16 MS. BRAGG: Thank you. (Applause).

17 MR. HACKWORTH: Our last registered speaker,
18 tonight, is Eric Curry, Sr.

19 MR. CURRY: Good evening, everyone. Just
20 like this young lady (indicating), I just
21 received a letter from my daughter's school
22 today.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Put the mic up.

24 MR. CURRY: That's not a problem. I don't
25 have a problem with speaking up. I just received

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1 a letter, from my daughter's school, today, and
2 had I not received this letter, I would have
3 never known about this meeting. I am a
4 homeowner, in Cambria Heights, for 45 years, and
5 I am not pleased with this decision as to
6 whatever zoning you all plan to do.

7 And my question is: Who is it going to
8 benefit?

9 We already know who it is going to affect.
10 121st, we all know who is over there and what
11 that divides. We are not having it. I am
12 telling you, right here, right now, I am
13 representing those, who is not speaking with the
14 pen (indicating).

15 Okay?

16 So you all made your decisions. We are
17 going to do what we got to do and that's all I
18 have to say. (Applause).

19 MR. HACKWORTH: There are no additional
20 registered speakers.

21 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We appear to have heard
22 from everyone who preregistered.

23 Is there anyone else, who would like to
24 address the Commission, that can register now or
25 just address the Commission?

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1 With the lights, I may not be able to see
2 you. Just come up to the mic, and you will have
3 your three minutes.

4 In that case, I want to thank everyone for
5 coming tonight. I can assure you, we are hearing
6 what you are saying, and we will take it into
7 consideration as we proceed. Thank you, very
8 much. We stand adjourned.

9 (Whereupon, at 8:13 p.m., the above matter
10 was concluded.)

11

12

13 I, JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, a Notary Public for
14 and within the State of New York, do hereby
15 certify that the above is a correct transcription
16 of my stenographic notes.

17

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JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, RPR

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