



May 9, 2022

VIA NYSCEF

Honorable Patrick F. McAllister
Supreme Court, Steuben County
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, New York 14840

Dear Judge McAllister and Dr. Jonathan Cervas,

My name is Theo Oshiro, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York. I am writing to withdraw my letter dated May 6, 2022, which was submitted in error, and replace it with this amended letter which contains Make the Road’s perspective on redistricting.

Make the Road New York is the largest grassroots organization of immigrants and working-class people of color in New York. We operate community centers in Brentwood, Long Island; Jackson Heights, Queens; Bushwick, Brooklyn; Port Richmond, Staten Island; and White Plains, Westchester. Our 24,000 members build the power of our communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.

Increasing civic engagement is a critical part of our work. We conduct outreach continuously to ensure community members’ voices are heard. During the 2020 census, we led in-person, phone, and digital outreach that reached hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our members participated in that process to make certain that our communities receive both adequate resources *and representation*. Now, to achieve such representation, we need district maps that are fair and reflect the geographic realities and growing numbers of our communities. We urge you to develop maps that abide by the following principles:

1. Respecting one person, one vote;
2. Refraining from abusive line-drawing, especially “cracking” and “packing”;
3. Respecting political subdivisions and communities of interest, especially for long-underrepresented immigrant, Black, and brown communities;
4. Ensuring compactness and contiguity; and
5. Prioritizing public participation and transparency.

Westchester

BROOKLYN
301 GROVE STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11237
718 418 7690

QUEENS
92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE
JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372
718 565 8500

STATEN ISLAND
161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302
718 727 1222

LONG ISLAND
1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE
BRENTWOOD, NY 11717
631 231 2220

WESTCHESTER
46 WALLER AVENUE
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605
914 948 8466

As it relates to Westchester, we are particularly focused on White Plains, where the largest concentration of our members live and where we operate a community center. White Plains should remain whole. The State Senate “cracking” of White Plains was particularly problematic for our community in the last round of redistricting. In addition, for Congressional District 16, we have heard and support testimony from many of our neighbors about the strong connections between communities in the northeast Bronx and southern Westchester.

Queens

As it relates to Queens, we are focused on the area in and around Jackson Heights, where we operate a community center and have a high density of members.

First, we believe that the 14th Congressional District should remain deeply rooted in Latinx and immigrant communities in Queens. We support the district including both areas of Queens and the Bronx (which are both heavily Latinx). But we do not believe the district should extend to Riverdale in the Bronx. Instead, in Queens, Jackson Heights, Corona, and Woodside should be kept together. These communities are deeply connected and function as a community of interest.

In the State Senate map, we focus on District 13. To the extent that the lines for this district will need to change, we would support maintaining its current orientation and deepening the connection to Woodside to reflect the lived experience of our membership.

Brooklyn

As it relates to Brooklyn, we are particularly focused on Bushwick, where we operate a community center and have a high density of members. We are deeply concerned that Bushwick—a historically- and heavily-Latinx community—could be separated from Williamsburg. The 2012 maps—while deeply flawed in other respects—kept Bushwick intact and maintained its connection with Williamsburg. These communities have a great deal in common—with strong links between residents and community organizations operating in them, especially in the Latinx community. We would also oppose any proposal that both divides Bushwick and cuts it off from the rest of North Brooklyn.

We urge you to deliver the representation that the growing Latinx community merits. Our community has grown by approximately 4% in Brooklyn over the past ten years. We deserve more representation.

Long Island

As it relates to Long Island, we urge you to focus on fixing the “cracking” of communities of color in previous maps—especially for the State Senate, where it has been rife. Overall on Long Island, the creation of two Senate districts where residents of color are a majority is better than the one such district.

In Suffolk County, it is crucial to stop the cracking of the greater Brentwood area (Brentwood, Central Islip, and North Bay Shore), where we operate a community center and have a high density of members. These communities must be kept together.

In Nassau County, it is imperative to avoid the cracking of communities of color, as well. Westbury and New Cassel should be kept whole and together. Freeport and Hempstead should be kept whole. Elmont should be kept whole and not placed in majority-Queens districts.

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration. Please contact me at theo.oshiro@maketheroadny.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Theo Oshiro