

May 5, 2022

The Honorable Patrick McCallister
Acting State Supreme Court Justice
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, NY 13810

Dr. Jonathan Cervas
Institute for Politics & Strategy
Carnegie Mellon University
Posner Hall 388
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

RE: Redistricting of Westchester County and Rockland County

Dear Justice McCallister and Dr. Cervas,

As more than one hundred current and former elected officials and community leaders throughout Westchester County and the Rivertowns of Rockland County — a group that includes current and former members of the Democratic, Republican, and Working Families Parties, as well as independents — we encourage you to respect the consensus of both Democratic and Republican members of the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission and keep Rockland County and northwestern Westchester County united within one congressional district. Our communities comprise an economically, socially, and culturally intertwined population. As both maps recognized, only a congressional map that unites them can respect their status as a community of interest.

As you know, Article III §4 (c) of the New York State Constitution lays out the criteria which must be considered in the construction of congressional districts. In addition to requiring an equal number of inhabitants, the state Constitution spells out specific standards which must be taken into consideration, including contiguity, compactness, and protection against denial or abridgement of the rights of racial or minority language groups. Additionally, the Constitution further requires that “[t]he commission shall consider the maintenance of cores of existing districts, of pre-existing political subdivisions, including counties, cities, and towns, and of communities of interest.”

The 17th Congressional District, as it is presently drawn, satisfies **each of these criteria** and need not be altered in any way other than to add population to meet the new federal population standard. We consider it essential that the court maintain the core of the current NY-17.

Keep The Westchester Rivertowns Together

The maps proposed by both the Republican and Democratic Commissioners on the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) agreed with the dozens of testimonials submitted to the commission that asserted that Westchester County, whose population of over 1 million people exceeds the capacity of any single congressional district, is best divided east and west, rather than north and south. The Rivertowns of Westchester County, a community that includes the towns of Greenburgh, Mount Pleasant, Ossining, Cortlandt, and the villages and unincorporated areas therein, as well as the city of Peekskill, is a community of interest owing to

its common exposure to the Hudson River floodplain and its shared infrastructure, which includes the Hudson Metro North Line, Route 9, and the Old Croton Aqueduct. The Rivertowns community shares local media outlets such as the Rivertowns Enterprise and the Hudson Independent, distinct from the eastern portions of the county. A Village Consortium consists of Hastings-on-Hudson, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, Tarrytown, and Sleepy Hollow that comes together to pursue improvements to public safety and transit use around the Mario Cuomo Bridge and Route 9.

The map proposed by the petitioners would sever this community of interest by arbitrarily separating Greenburgh from Mount Pleasant, Ossining, Cortlandt, and Peekskill. The map passed by the legislature, struck down by this Court, further severs this community of interest by separating Hastings-on-Hudson into one district; Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, Tarrytown, Sleepy Hollow, and Ossining into another; and Cortlandt and Peekskill into a third district. Those lines have no basis whatsoever in the environment, infrastructure, or social and economic life of our community. Map A proposed by the commission respects the natural boundaries of our community by uniting all of the Westchester Rivertowns into a single congressional district.

Keep the Rockland Rivertowns with the Westchester Rivertowns

The Westchester County Rivertowns should be unified with the Rockland County Rivertowns due to their common interests in controlling the Hudson River floodplain and their economic, social, and transit connection by the Mario Cuomo (Tappan Zee) Bridge and the Haverstraw-Ossining Ferry. Both the Democratic and Republican commissioners on the IRC agreed that this was an accurate representation of communities of interest. There is broad bipartisan agreement that Westchester is best split east west, not north south.

By contrast, the petitioners propose to sever our community to create an arbitrary and unfamiliar district that stretches to encompass fragments of four counties: eastern Putnam County, eastern Dutchess County, northern Westchester County, and Rockland County. The map proposed by the petitioners separates our Rivertowns community of interest by excluding Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, and Tarrytown from the Rockland Rivertowns. In fact, the petitioners' map even separates Tarrytown and Nyack, which are directly connected by the Mario Cuomo (Tappan Zee) Bridge. The petitioners' complete disregard for both of the Commission's maps and the testimony underlying them strikes us as a brazen and indefensible attempt to draw a partisan gerrymander.

Keep White Plains Whole and United with CD-17

White Plains is the urban center and economic engine for our region. Whereas the legislature's unconstitutional plan for District 17 would have divided White Plains between two congressional districts, the map you devise to remedy the legislature's errors should keep White Plains whole and within District 17. Once again, we ask you to honor the bipartisan consensus of the IRC: both sets of maps included all of White Plains in District 17, along with all of Rockland and all of the Rivertowns (except for Peekskill in the Map B).

White Plains is the most accessible municipality in Central Westchester County. The city is situated at the intersection of several highways (the Cross Westchester Expressway, I-684, the Taconic State Parkway/Bronx River Parkway) and several thoroughfares (Central Avenue, Mamaroneck Avenue, and Post Road). And the city is also a hub for several Metro North and Bee Line Bus routes. Further, White Plains is the headquarters of a number of important private and public sector institutions in the County.

White Plains is inextricably intertwined with the northern and western reaches of the county moreso than with its south and southeast. For residents of northern Westchester and the Rivertowns, White Plains is the closest urban center. In sharp contrast, the southern and eastern portion of the county are dominated by the larger urban centers of Yonkers, New Rochelle, and Mount Vernon. Many Rocklanders also work and obtain services in White Plains, which is just a few exits past the Mario Cuomo Bridge off of I-287.

White Plains is also an important center of gravity for communities of color in northern Westchester. White Plains serves as the hub for the Hispanic community, acting as an important central meeting point for the Hispanic communities in Peekskill, Ossining, Sleepy Hollow, Mount Kisco, and Elmsford; for example, LatinoU College Access, headquartered in White Plains, serves families in each of those municipalities. White Plains shares a NAACP chapter with the town of Greenburgh.

Conclusion

Many of us testified before the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission to keep the Westchester Rivertowns together in a single congressional district,¹ to keep the Rockland Rivertowns with the Westchester Rivertowns,² to split Westchester on an east/west orientation rather than north/south,³ and to keep White Plains whole in such a district.⁴ As you consider how to secure fair and effective representation for every community in New York State, we hope that you will carefully consider the record the Commission assembled and both sets of maps the Commission proposed, either of which we feel would accurately respect the communities of interest in our region (though we believe Map A better, which does not sever Peekskill or bisect the Town of Cortlandt as Map B does, better reflects this).

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hon. George Latimer, County Executive, Westchester County

¹ Testimony of [Verity Van Tassel Richards, November 7, 2021](#), [Lisa Genn, November 8, 2021](#), [Paul Feiner August 2, 2021](#), [Mark Lafayette, August 2, 2021](#), [Lia Taylor Schwartz, August 2, 2021](#), [Jay Leon, August 2, 2021](#), [Ellen Hendrickx, August 2, 2021](#).

² Testimony of [Clyde Lederman, November 8, 2021](#), [Tomara Aldrich, November 5, 2021](#), [Peter Bernstein, October 26, 2021](#), Testimony of [Ivanya Alpart, November 3, 2021](#), [Testimony of Shari Maurer, August 2, 2021](#), Testimony of [Meredith Wisner, August 2, 2021](#).

³ Testimony of [MaryJane Shimsky, November 8, 2021](#), [Suzanne Berger, November 8, 2021](#)

⁴ Testimony of [Paul Diamond, August 2, 2021](#), Testimony of [John Nonna, August 2, 2021](#).

Hon. Jay Hood, Jr., Chair/Member, Rockland County Legislature

Hon. Catherine Borgia, Chair/Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. Jewel Williams Johnson, Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. MaryJane Shimsky, Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. Colin Smith, Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. Ben Boykin II, Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. Paul Feiner, Supervisor, Town of Greenburgh

Hon. Richard Becker, Supervisor, Town of Cortlandt

Hon. Howard Phillips Jr., Supervisor, Town of Haverstraw

Hon. Dana Levenberg, Supervisor, Town of Ossining

Hon. Brian Pugh, Mayor, Village of Croton-on-Hudson

Hon. Ken Wray, Mayor, Village of Sleepy Hollow

Hon. Bruce Tucker, Mayor, Village of Piermont

Hon. Brian Smith, Mayor, Village of Irvington

Hon. Karen Brown, Mayor, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. Dr. Don Hammond, Mayor, Village of Nyack

Hon. Nancy Kaboolian, Mayor, Village of Ardsley

Hon. Gina Picinich, Mayor, Village of Mount Kisco

Hon. Robert Williams, Mayor, Village of Elmsford

Hon. Tom Roach, Mayor, City of White Plains

Hon. Peter Scherer, Mayor, Village of Pleasantville

Hon. Vivian McKenzie, Mayor, City of Peekskill

Hon. Rika Levin, Mayor, Village of Ossining

Hon. Louise Parker, Deputy Mayor, Village of Nyack

Hon. Rebecca McGovern, Deputy Mayor, Tarrytown

Hon. Lisa Abzun, Deputy Mayor, Village of Mount Kisco

Hon. Andy DiJusto, Deputy Mayor, Village of Ardsley

Hon. Gina Jackson, Council Member, Greenburgh

Hon. Ken Jones, Council Member, Greenburgh

Hon. Ramon Fernandez, Council Member, Peekskill

Hon. Nadine Hunt-Robinson, Council Member, White Plains

Hon. Mark Gilliland, Trustee, Village of Irvington

Hon. Omar Lopez, Trustee, Village of Ossining

Hon. Laurence Lonky, Trustee, Village of Irvington

Hon. Arlene Burgos, Trustee, Village of Irvington

Hon. Mitchell Bard, Trustee, Village of Irvington

Hon. David Vinjamuri, Trustee, Village of Pleasantville

Hon. Nicole Asquith, Trustee, Village of Pleasantville

Hon. Robert Hoyt, Trustee, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. David Kim, Trustee, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. Paul Rinaldi, Trustee, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. Effie Phillips-Staley, Trustee, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. Thomas Mitchell, Trustee, Village of Tarrytown

Hon. Donna Lightfoot Cooper, Trustee, Village of Nyack

Hon. Joe Rand, Trustee, Village of Nyack

Hon. Marie Lorenzini, Trustee, Village of Nyack

Hon. Nate Mitchell, Trustee, Village of Piermont

Hon. Melissa Banta, Member, Ossining Board of Education

Hon. James Marshall, Member, Nyack Board of Education

Hon. Lisa Rudley, Member, Ossining Board of Education

Hon. John Nonna, Former Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators; Former Mayor, Village of Pleasantville

Hon. Alfreda Williams, Former Member, Westchester County Board of Legislators

Hon. Nancy Low-Hogan, Former Member, Rockland County Board of Legislators

Hon. Thom Kleiner, Former Supervisor, Orangetown

Hon. Andre Rainey, Former Mayor, Peekskill

Richard Kavesh, Former Mayor, Village of Nyack

Emily Feiner, Former Deputy Mayor, Village of Nyack; Member, Rockland United

Hon. Drew Claxton, Former Deputy Mayor, City of Peekskill

Hon. Kelly Ruby, Former Trustee, Village of Piermont

Hon. Ivanya Alpart, Former Trustee, Village of Piermont; Member, Rockland United

Michael Lockett, Former Trustee, Village of South Nyack; Board Member The Nyack Center; Member, Orangetown Environmental Committee; Steering Committee Member, Rockland People's Panel on Policing

Diana Lemon, Former Member, Ossining Board of Education; Member, Ossining Youth Bureau Advisory Board

Douglas Stone, Former Chair, Village of Piermont Planning Board

Michelle Adams, President, Rivertowns Chamber of Commerce

Meredith Wisner, Member, Rockland United

Marc Pessin, Steering Committee, Rockland Coalition to End the New Jim Crow

Bill Batson, Author and Illustrator, Nyack Sketch Log

Reverend Shaun Jones, Star Bethlehem Baptist Church, Ossining

Jessica Kessleman, Host, Heritage Radio Network

John Gromada, Rockland Citizens Action Network

Robert Schloss, Leadership, Dayenu Rockland Westchester

Allison Fine, Former President, Temple Beth Abraham; Board Member, Westchester Jewish Council

Darrel Kidd, Basileus, Beta Alpha Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. of White Plains

Wilbur Aldridge, Regional Director, NAACP of Mid Hudson/Westchester

Marjorie Hsu, Board Chair, Asian American Federation; Chair, Sleepy Hollow Planning Board; Co-Chair, Westchester County Asian American Advisory Board; Co-Leader, Rivertowns Vote; Advisory Board Member, Westchester Community Foundation.

Meredith Wisner, Steering Committee, Rockland United

Paul Diamond, Steering Committee, Rockland United

Tomara Aldrich, Steering Committee, Rockland United

Maggie White, Founding Member, Rockland United

Jocelyn Cox, Founding Member, Rockland United

Taylor Mandelbaum, Member, Rockland United

Andrew Ratzkin, Member, Westchester County Climate Smart Communities Task Force

Shari Maurer, Local Group Manager, New York and Local Group Lead, Rockland, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Jess Goodman, Former President, Upper Nyack Parent Teacher Association; Member, Nyack NAACP Education Committee; Member, Rockland People's Panel on Policing

Tracy Dunstan, MLS

Shari Fischberg, Member, Rockland Arts in Public Places Commission

Sherry McGill, Rockland Community Advocate

Jake Jacobs, Steering Committee, New York State Allies for Public Education

Jeff Wright, Chair, Civic Engagement Committee, Greenburgh-White Plains NAACP

Ali Moss, President, Dobbs Ferry Library Board of Trustees

Robin Larkins, Executive Director, SPRING Community Partners

Frank Williams, Executive Director, White Plains Youth Bureau

Lindsay Farrell, President and CEO, Open Door Family Medical Centers of Ossining

Julia Guyduk Healy, Steering Committee, Rockland United

Greg Guyduk Healy, Member, Rockland United

Lindsay Siegel, Managing Director, The City Fellowship, Member, Rockland United

Anna Hall, Member, Rockland United

Deborah Stedge, Member, Rockland United

Miriam Hoffman, Inductee, Rockland Women's Hall of Fame, 2019; convener of The Rockland Coalition Against Domestic Violence which became Rockland Center for Safety and Change

Waddell W. Stillman, President, Historic Hudson Valley

Tim Dalton, Pastor, First Baptist Church of White Plains

Hope Indivisible of Cortlandt, Croton on Hudson, Ossining and Peekskill

YWCA of White Plains & Central Westchester

Rockland Coalition to End The New Jim Crow