

May 4, 2022

Hon. Patrick F. McAllister
Steuben County Supreme Court
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, NY 14810

Dr. Jonathan Cervas, Special Master
Steuben County Supreme Court
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, NY 14810

Dear Justice McAllister and Special Master Cervas,

As residents and concerned citizens, we write in full support of the 63rd State Senate District that was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor this year, which connects the Town of Amherst with portions of the City of Buffalo and City of Lackawanna. As Buffalo's largest suburb, which shares University at Buffalo campuses with the city, and as home to the planned expansion of the Metro Rail system, Amherst's economic, demographic, and geographic ties to Buffalo far outweigh its connections to the communities in the Town's current Senate district, which are largely rural or even stretch an hour's drive away into the City of Rochester.

The City of Buffalo is the most diverse municipality in Erie County. However, the Town of Amherst has undergone significant demographic shifts over the past two decades, with these trends likely to continue.¹ While the white population has decreased from 2010 to 2022 by nearly 4,700 individuals, the Black population has increased by 2,329 to 9,263 and the Asian population has increased by 5,307 to 14,875². In fact, Amherst's large and growing Asian-American population makes up approximately 12% of the town's total population. Not only does Amherst have a growing racial minority population, but also has a growing language minority population, which are communities of interest that deserve fair representation in the State Senate. As Buffalo and Western New York continue to attract migrants and refugees³, we can expect that trend to continue, once again increasing Amherst's similarities and ties with Buffalo.

Contrary to Amherst's status as a dense and highly developed suburb, many of the other municipalities in the existing 61st State Senate District are either rural or more traditional "bedroom community" suburbs that do not closely resemble Amherst. In fact, according to recent census data, nearby Genesee County is nearly 95% white⁴, while the Town of Amherst is only 75% white. By including Amherst with these dissimilar communities of interest, the Town's voice is unfairly diluted and its interests before the Legislature are therefore not as closely addressed as deserved. Additionally, the Town's inclusion with portions of Rochester, roughly 70 miles away, does not fulfill the state's goal of creating districts that are "as compact in form as practicable."⁵

As you may know, the University at Buffalo is the largest SUNY campus, with more than 30,000 students spread between the two main campuses in Amherst and Buffalo, as well as the Jacobs School of Medicine located close to downtown on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The University at Buffalo is one of Western New York's largest employers and economic drivers, directly employing nearly 6,000 people and creating an economic impact of more than \$1.7 billion⁶. This community of interest ought to be unified in one compact Senate District, as opposed to the current situation which dilutes its voting power by combining it with dissimilar communities.

¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Amherst+town%2C+Erie+County%2C+New+York&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Amherst+town%2C+Erie+County%2C+New+York&t=-01+-+All+available+basic+aces+alone&y=2010&d=DEC+Summary+File+2&tid=DECENNIALS2010.PCT42>

³ <https://www.buffalo.edu/ubnow/stories/2021/09/kim-immigrants-refugees.html>

⁴ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Genesee+County%2C+New+York>

⁵ <https://nyirc.gov/laws-regs>

⁶ https://www.buffalo.edu/home/ub_at_a_glance/the-buffalo-niagara-region/economic_growth.html

Additionally, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, is currently in the early stages of a planned expansion of Metro Rail,⁷ Upstate New York's only light rail system. This expansion, once completed, will connect Downtown Buffalo, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, the University at Buffalo's South Campus, and the University at Buffalo's North Campus in one unified light rail system, further tying these municipalities together. With major employers located in Buffalo, such as M&T Bank, and in Amherst, such as GEICO⁸, thousands of Buffalo residents work in Amherst, and vice versa. In fact, according to a study by the University at Buffalo, the top zip code where University Heights⁹ residents work is in the Town of Amherst, further underscoring the deep ties between these areas¹⁰.

For these numerous reasons, we urge you to undo the 2012 gerrymander that discriminated against racial and language minorities by connecting the Town of Amherst to rural and distant communities and to instead link it with its direct neighbor and most similar community of interest, the City of Buffalo, by approving the 63rd State Senate District that was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor this year. We appreciate the time you are taking to review these concerns and recommendations in detail.

Sincerely,



Pastor George Nicholas
Convener, African American Health Equity Task Force
Senior Pastor, Buffalo Center for Health Equity



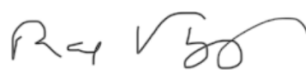
Dr. Tonja Williams
Superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools



Ada Hopson-Clemons
Program Director, Masten Block Club Coalition
Officer, Board of Block Clubs of Buffalo & Erie
County



Dr. Candace Johnson
President & CEO, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer
Center



Dr. Raul Vazquez
President & CEO, GBUAHN



Dr. Lavonne Ansari
CEO, Community Health Center of Buffalo



Pastor James Giles
President/CEO, Back to Basics Outreach Ministries



Peter DeJesus Jr.
President of the Western New York Area Labor
Federation, AFL-CIO

Erie County Medical Center
Erie County Medical Center Corporation

Stephanie Barber-Geter
President, Hamlin Park Taxpayer Association

⁷ <https://www.nftametrotransitexpansion.com/>

⁸ <https://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/subscriber-only/2022/01/28/largest-employers-in-buffalo-and.html>

⁹ University Heights is traditionally defined as the Northeast corner of the City of Buffalo, directly abutting the University at Buffalo's South Campus.

¹⁰ <http://archplan.buffalo.edu/content/dam/ap/4->

Research/UniversityHeights/NeighborhoodOverview/NeighborhoodOverview_Fullreport.pdf



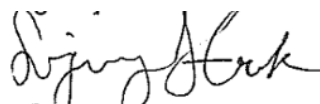
Thomas Beauford Jr.
President & CEO, Buffalo Urban League



Richard Lipsitz
President Emeritus, Western New York Area Labor
Federation, AFL-CIO



Bishop Michael A. Badger
Bethesda World Harvest International Fellowship of
Churches, Inc.



Sirgourney Cook
Executive Director, King Urban Life Center



Pastor Dwayne Jones
Mt. Aaron Missionary Baptist Church



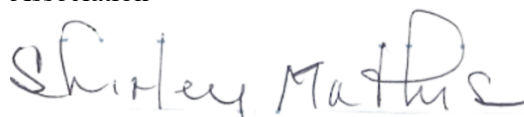
Dr. Lorrie Clemon
President, D'Youville University



Imam Fajri Ansari
Masjid Nu'man



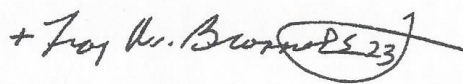
Brian Pilarski
Executive Director, Seneca-Babcock Community
Association



Shirley Mathis
Walden Tenant Council



Stephen Tucker
President & CEO, Northland Workforce Training Center



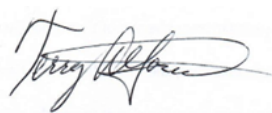
Reverend Dr. T. Anthony Bronner
Elim Christian Fellowship Church



Sam Radford
Co-chair, We the Parents
Member, Buffalo Urban Think Tank
Member, Buffalo Equity Coalition



Margaret Overdorf
Executive Director, The Valley Community Center



Terry Alford
Executive Director, Michigan Street African American
Heritage Corridor Commission



Dr. Benjamin A. Cashaw
President, Fruit Belt Coalition



Mike Cartwright
Board President, University Heights Collaborative



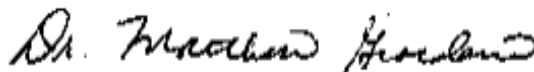
Mark A. Sullivan
President & CEO, Catholic Health Systems



Joyce Stewart
Pratt Street Block Club



Franchelle Parker
Executive Director, Open Buffalo



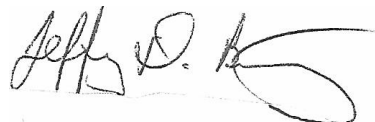
Dr. Matthew Giordano
President, Villa Maria College



Dr. Ken Macur
President, Medaille College



Patrick Gromley
Executive Director, Old First Ward Community Center



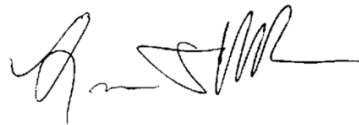
Jeff Binz
Director, UAW Region 9



Cindi McEachon
Executive Director, Peaceprints of WNY



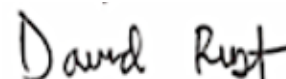
Mark Mortenson
President, Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens



Lou Fazzolari
President, IBEW Local 2104

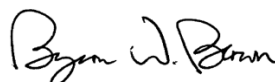


Patrick Kaler
President & CEO, Visit Buffalo Niagara



David Rust
CEO & Executive Director, Say Yes Buffalo

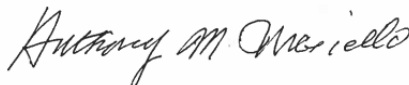
Jonathan A. Dandes
Corporate Vice President
Rich Products Corporation



Byron Brown
Mayor, City of Buffalo



Brian Kulpa
Supervisor, Town of Amherst



Anthony M. Masiello
Former Mayor, City of Buffalo



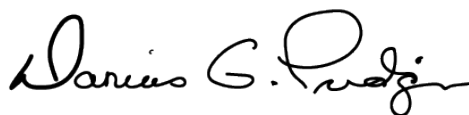
Susan Grelick
Former Supervisor, Town of Amherst



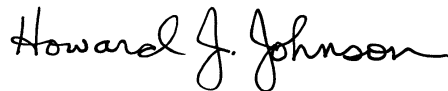
Barbara Miller-Williams
Comptroller, City of Buffalo



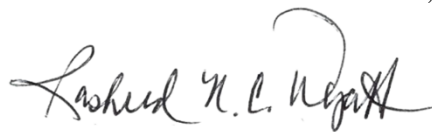
April N.M. Baskin
Chairwoman of the Erie County Legislature, District 2



Darius G. Pridgen
Buffalo Common Council President, Ellicott District



Howard J. Johnson Jr.
Erie County Legislator, District 1



Rasheed Wyatt
Buffalo Common Councilmember, University District



Jeanne M. Vinal
Erie County Legislator, District 5



Christopher Scanlon
Buffalo Common Councilmember, South District



Terrance Heard
Buffalo School Board, At-Large Member



Joel P. Feroletto
Buffalo Common Councilmember, Delaware District



Jacqueline G. Berger
Deputy Supervisor
Councilmember, Town of Amherst



Bryan Bollman
Buffalo Common Councilmember, Lovejoy District



Michael Szukala
Councilmember, Town of Amherst



Mitch Nowakowski
Buffalo Common Councilmember, Fillmore District

Shawn A. Lavin
Councilmember, Town of Amherst

Ulysees O. Wingo, Sr.
Buffalo Common Councilmember, Masten District