

May 4, 2022

Hon. Patrick F. McAllister & Dr. Jonathan Cervas
Steuben County Supreme Court
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, New York 14810

Dear Justice McAllister and Dr. Cervas,

We, the undersigned, are leaders and residents living and working in the City of Lackawanna. We are very concerned about the potential of a drastic change to the State Senate map that was passed this year by the Legislature and signed by Governor Hochul. We firmly believe that the needs and interests of our city are closely aligned with our neighbors, the City of Buffalo, and that our fellow city residents would be best-served by being joined with similar communities of interest. For that reason, we strongly believe the 63rd State Senate District map as approved should be reaffirmed.

Historically, the communities of Lackawanna and South Buffalo have been intertwined. The Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens are located immediately across the city line in Buffalo, yet are seen as a shared asset between our two areas. Likewise, the Our Lady of Victory National Shrine & Basilica, located just within the borders of Lackawanna, is also seen by South Buffalonians as part of their local culture. Our city was chartered as a result of the construction of the Lackawanna Steel Company, later to become Bethlehem Steel. Generations of Buffalonians worked in the mills, further tying our communities together.

Beyond our historical and cultural ties, Lackawanna is far more similar to Buffalo than it is to its neighbors, the towns of West Seneca and Hamburg, both of which are more suburbanized communities that were largely built and populated in the post-war period, while much of Lackawanna was established at the turn of the century, just like Buffalo. While West Seneca is 96% white¹ and Hamburg is 91% white,² the City of Lackawanna is only 75% white³ and is home to a large and vibrant immigrant population⁴, just as is the City of Buffalo. For example, both Lackawanna and Buffalo schools have high English Language Learner (ELL) enrollment, with Lackawanna Schools reporting 345 ELL students⁵ and Buffalo 5368 ELL students⁶. Conversely, school districts in Hamburg and West Seneca report very few ELL students. As a result, these communities of interest would be best-served by joining with the City of Buffalo, which also boasts a large and diverse minority population with similar needs and concerns as to our own. We believe that by including them in a much more suburban and less diverse district, the voices of racial and language minorities would be unjustly diluted.

The economic similarities between Buffalo and Lackawanna once again underscore the importance of ensuring these communities remain in the same Senate district. While Hamburg and West Seneca have poverty rates of 6.5%⁷ and 7%⁸, respectively, Buffalo and Lackawanna have significantly higher and similar poverty rates, at 28.3%⁹ and 25.4%¹⁰. Though these numbers are unfortunate, they speak to the need for these communities to be able to elect representatives who can prioritize their significant needs.

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

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

³ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Lackawanna+city%2C+New+York&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

⁴ <https://accesswny.org/index.php/about-us/the-access-of-wny-story>

⁵ <https://data.nysed.gov/ell.php?year=2019&instid=800000052156>

⁶ <https://data.nysed.gov/ell.php?year=2021&instid=800000052968>

⁷ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0600000US3602931654&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

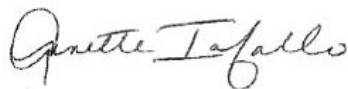
⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0600000US3602980918&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=1600000US3611000&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

¹⁰ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=1600000US3640189&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

As a result of the historical ties, geographic proximity, economic needs, and cultural similarity between the City of Lackawanna and City of Buffalo, we respectfully urge you to enact the 63rd State Senate District map that was adopted by the Legislature and approved by Governor Hochul. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

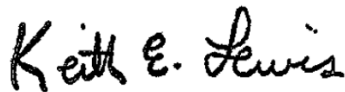
Sincerely,



Annette Iafallo
Mayor, City of Lackawanna



Geoffrey Szymanski
Former Mayor, City of Lackawanna



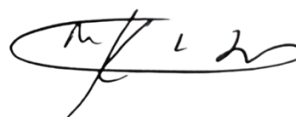
Keith Lewis
Superintendent, Lackawanna City School District



John Gilmour
Erie County Legislator, District 9



Mark Mortenson
President, Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens



Pastor Keith Mobley
Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church



Anwar Al-Kalai
Lackawanna Islamic Mosque
President, Imams Council of WNY President,
Lackawanna Islamic Center



Talib Z. Abdullah, MSW
Executive Director, Arab-American Community
Center for Economic & Social Services of WNY



Amira Muflahi
1st Ward Council Member, City of Lackawanna



Karl Anderson
2nd Ward Council Member, City of Lackawanna



John Ingram
President, Glover Gardens Tenant Council
Former 1st Ward Council Member, City of Lackawanna



Dean J. Moretti
Third Ward Council Member, City of Lackawanna