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AMIT

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The Jewish Education Project

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Union for Reform Judaism

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations

United Hebrew Trades/NY Jewish Labor Committee

United Jewish Council of the East Side

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Washington Heights-Inwood Jewish Community Council

Westchester Jewish Council

WIZO - Women's International Zionist Organization

Workmen's Circle

Zionist Organization of America



May 17, 2022

Hon. Patrick McAllister

Special Master Jonathan Cervas

Steuben County Supreme & County Court

3 East Pulteney Square

Bath, NY 14810

Re: *Harkenrider v. Hochul* E2022-0116CV

Submission of Interested Party:

Jewish Community Relations Council of NY

Letter of the
Jewish Community Relations Council of New York
and the
UJA-Federation of New York
Opposing elements of the Congressional Map
As submitted by the Special Master

Dear Justice McAllister and Special Master Cervas:

We appreciate that the Court undertook a formidable and thankless task. Redistricting requires complex decisions balancing, often contradictory, priorities. Given the time constraints we salute the Court's efforts. Examining the proposed lines, we find many problematic issues that will be raised by our colleagues in other Jewish organizations, but we will focus on two, related, major concerns: 1) that the neighborhood distinctiveness and integrity of Manhattan's East Side and West Side should be maintained, and 2) that Boro Park's Jewish community should be connected to communities that share their interests so that they are less politically isolated, and their political voices are more likely to be heard.

The *Sidewalks of New York* – a *Fin de Siècle* ditty – defines the communities of interest of Manhattan for the ages: East Side, West Side. Even without mentioning the current incumbents, New York City's electoral history spanning decades and multiple redistrictings, shows the East Side "Silk Stocking District" represented by such giants as John Lindsay, Ed Koch, and Bill Green; the West Side's representatives include such legendary figures as William Fitts Ryan,

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Bella Abzug, and Ted Weiss. Each masterfully represented their districts, with district population cores reflecting true communities of interest, with distinction. Each of these elected officials played or plays an outsized role on the national scene. New York City benefited.

Our expertise is the demographics, communal structure and defined interests of Jewish communities in New York City, Long Island and Westchester. Zooming into the Jewish communities of Manhattan we observe that there are obvious differences between the East Side and West Side Jewish communities.

While both the East Side and the West Side support synagogues and Jewish schools of national stature, East Side Jews can be clearly differentiated from West Side Jews. Rarely do the East Side Jews belong to synagogues located on the West Side, or vice versa. To a great extent, seldom do Jewish parents on the West Side send their children to Jewish schools on the East Side or the other way around.

While it is impossible to analyze the Special Master's proposed districts in the time allotted, there are stark differences between the current CD 10 and CD 12. According to our 2014 study, ("Brief Profiles of the New York Congressional Districts") CD 12 Jewish households have almost triple the number of children (33% vs. 12%) compared to CD 10. On the other hand, the East Side has far more vulnerable seniors (Age 65 and living alone): 24% vs. 17%. Nine percent of the Jewish households in CD 10 include a Holocaust survivor vs. five percent in CD 12.

Most strikingly, 37% of the households in CD 10 identify as Orthodox Jews, compared to 6 percent of households in CD 12. Much of this imbalance is due to the inclusion of Boro Park in the West Side district. However, it should be noted that the Modern Orthodox population of the West Side often supports the interests of the Yeshivish (centrist Orthodox) and Hasidic populations of Boro Park, reducing their political isolation.

While we acknowledge that the Special Master's proposed plan keeps the corpus of Boro Park's Jewish community intact within the proposed CD 10, Boro Park is cut off from the adjoining neighborhoods of Flatbush, Kensington and Midwood. These neighborhoods can be easily defined as sharing Boro Park as a community of interest. Instead, Boro Park's interests are distinct from even the Jews of Lower Manhattan, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace and Brownstone Brooklyn. The Special Master's proposed map makes it incredibly difficult to make their political voices heard.

The Jewish-religious aspects of the East Side/West Side dichotomy only reflect a fraction of the uniqueness of the two, somewhat adjoining neighborhoods. It is hard for a non-New Yorker to understand how different the East Side and West Side are. Every level of New York politics and government respects that geographic/urban planning distinction: City Community Planning Boards, Police Precincts, School Boards, City Council, State Senate, State Assembly and Congress. Even New York State Judicial Districts are drawn respecting East Side and West Side boundaries. All of these districts clearly reflect the distinct communities of interest. The Special Master's map ignores that and would yield the biggest geographic/tectonic shift in New York politics since the opening of Central Park before the Civil War.

We understand the inherent difficulties in the drawing of district plans weighing the Constitutional priorities. Unfortunately, the Special Master's plan puts the greater emphasis on "Compactness" as opposed to "Communities of Interest", ripping fraying threads of the social fabric. In this case, the proposed plan sets off a political game of musical chairs resulting in the fact that communities will not know their representatives and their elected representatives will neither know nor understand their constituencies.

We humbly implore the Court and Special Master to reconsider his plan and develop a plan that reflects the clear communal integrity and communities of interest of the East Side and the West Side and the Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn.

We thank the Court and the Special Master for their consideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cheryl Fishbein".

Cheryl Fishbein
President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gideon Taylor".

Gideon Taylor
Executive Vice President and CEO