

Subject: Re: Testimony for redistricting lines

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views regarding the district lines for the Congressional district that represents my area. I am an African American who has lived in East Midtown Plaza, a complex comprised of 7 buildings between 1st and 2nd Ave and 23rd and 25th street on the East Side of Manhattan for 45 years. I am the State Committeewoman for the 74th Assembly District. My husband, Claude L. Winfield, is Assistant Treasurer for Community Board 6 Manhattan, former Chairperson and Vice Chair totaling 21 years of service.

As a longtime community activist, I believe that all of Community Board 6 Manhattan should be in the same Congressional District. Our community is stronger when we have one member of Congress to talk with about the issues that are critical to our neighborhood. If our community board is split up, we would have to educate more than one member of Congress about the issues we care about, and we would not be able to command as much interest and concern from someone who just represents segments of our area.

I believe that this point is illustrated by an issue that is very close to my heart – the effort to save the Stein Senior Center. Stein Senior Center serves people aged 60 or older. Most of its members live within Community Board 6. A few years ago, the Center was forced to move three times in a very short space of time. All of the spaces used by the Center are located in Community Board 6. After losing its longtime facility, the Center first moved to 340 E. 24th Street until it lost its lease. It then moved to East End Temple at 245 E. 17th St for nearly a year. We worried that the Center would have to close if it did not find permanent space in our neighborhood, and if it lacked the resources to build out the space so seniors could use it. Thanks in part to federal Community Development Block Grant funds, the Center was able to move into its current space in the building at 204 E. 23rd Street. It is very important to seniors in my area to have a spacious facility that can serve congregate meals, offer daily activities, provide educational and exercise courses, and provide health information and social services. Most of all, it is important to have a convenient center where seniors can meet friends and socialize. It was critical to have a member of Congress who understood the importance of Stein Senior Center to our community, and who had the ability to work with the relevant agencies to ensure that necessary federal funds were allocated to Stein. If our community is broken up, the member of Congress who represents Stein may not appreciate its importance to our community. Further, if the neighborhood is subdivided, the member of Congress could end up representing few people who use the facility. We need our member of Congress to represent the entire community and Stein Senior Center. Accordingly, I believe that Community Board 6 should be united in one Congressional District.

I note that my husband and I were involved in the effort to save the Manhattan VA Hospital on 23rd Street collecting a thousand signatures to support this issue. I have been a longtime member of the Bellevue Advisory Board, including during the time when the federal government considered shuttering the Manhattan VA. I know how important it was to have a member of Congress who represented the VA, Bellevue and NYU Medical Center, and who understood the critical partnerships among these institutions. Having someone representing all three institutions was critical to our effort to save the VA. Someone who represented just one of them may not have had the incentive to learn the issues that enabled us to make a strong argument to save the VA.

I urge you to consider my views regarding the district lines for the Congressional district that represents

my area.

Sincerely,

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