Minna Elias

336 West End Ave, 5A

New York, NY 10023

Minna.elias@gmail.com

917-860-6563

Good afternoon. My name is Minna Elias. I have lived on the Upper West Side for virtually my entire life – the exception being my first five years when I lived in Murray Hill. I believe that the East and West Side want very different things from their congressional representatives, and that it would be wrong to put them together in the same district. My perspective is reinforced by the fact that, while I have been retired for more than two years, for more than 25 years, I worked for Congresswoman Maloney. Quite simply, East Siders and West Siders want something different from their representative. And while Congresswoman Maloney and Congressman Nadler often vote the same way, there are countless instances when they properly represent the interest of their districts by voting differently.

Traditionally the West Side has been more liberal, more bohemian, more involved in the arts. We do not share community boards, police precincts or zip codes. The Upper West Side does not share a school district with the Upper East Side – and in fact that has meant that we have not had access to some of the great high schools that are located on the East Side. As a result, our children rarely attend the same public schools for elementary, middle and high school.

If I were to define the Upper West Side, it would be the area that goes from Columbia at 116th Street to 59th Street, from the Hudson River to Central Park. The West Side generally would be the area that goes down the West Side of Manhattan down to Battery Park. The Western border would be the Hudson River. The Eastern border is less clear – from 110th to 59th Street it would be Central Park; below that, I would simply say the border would fall somewhere in the middle of the island. Central Park South belongs with the East Side district as it has been for more than 30 years. Central Park South has more in common with the East Side than the West Side. They do not share a community board or a school district with the West Side. Finally, I believe that Borough Park fits this district well. They are connected by the M train which runs down the West Side of Manhattan into Borough Park. There is a synagogue attended by Boyaner Hasidim on 82nd and West End Avenue (the Boyaner Shtiebel) and a Boyaner community in Borough Park. While much of the West Side community is more liberal, there are a number of Hasidic institutions and organizations on the West Side of Manhattan. In 'Why is this Developer Building 'Kosher' Condos on the Upper West Side" by Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt which appeared in The Forward on February 19, 2019, there is a great list of ultra-Orthodox institutions on the Upper West Side:

"the Vorhand Shul and the Koznitz Shteebel, both on West 91st Street; Congregation Ahavath Chesed, known by locals as the Ridniker Shteibel, on West 89th Street, and the Boyaner Shteibel, on West End Avenue. At the community’s heart, on West End Avenue, stands the West Side Kollel, a center of Torah study for men that has about a dozen regulars studying Torah there full time; in the evenings, after work, it hosts popular Torah classes for men. On West 89th Street, Yeshiva Ketana, a boys’ yeshiva with over 100 young students, has been operating since 1946."

Manhattan is oriented along a North/South axis. That means that it is easier and faster to get from the Upper West Side to City Hall than it is to get to the 92nd Street Y. When you go along the North/South corridor, you are going with the natural flow. When you go crosstown, you are either travelling at a crawl through traffic or you are force to take multiple subway trains.

I believe it makes sense for the congressional districts to follow the natural flow and separate the East Side from the West Side. Manhattan benefits from having different representatives for the East Side and West Side.