

Greetings Commissioners -

I am a resident of the city of Peekskill, currently in the 17th Congressional District. I am also a member of the school board and advocate for our schools and community.

Currently we are in a congressional district with other small cities and river towns in Westchester county: Ossining, Tarrytown, and White Plains. In the proposed redistrict map, we would be separated from White Plains and part of Tarrytown. We would be grouped with mostly rural areas that don't share our community's needs and advocacy efforts.

Like many other small Westchester city districts and river towns, recent immigrants from Central and South America make up a large portion of our population. Within the school district, 60-70% of our students are Hispanic, and many of those are new arrivals and English Language Learners. This is also generally the case for Ossining and White Plains. Many of our students experience food insecurity and qualify for free and reduced price lunch. As a result of our advocacy efforts along with other small city school districts in Westchester, we have been able to secure federal grants so that none of our students experiences hunger in school or is shamed for receiving free lunch. Meals are even provided to students and families over the summer or when they were home due to Covid restrictions.

Small cities and river towns in Westchester share a love of our vibrant and diverse communities. We need to be able to advocate for aid and funding that takes into account the high costs of employment, construction and materials in the New York City suburbs. Costs in more rural areas North of us aren't as high and the density in their schools is not as high. It benefits us to be represented in Congress along with other small cities and river towns in Westchester county by those who will understand and have time to address our needs. I fear we would be lost among the more rural communities in the current proposal.

Thanks so much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Branwen MacDonald
Peekskill, NY