Testimony Before NYIRC (New York Independent Redistricting Commission

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Submitted by: Howard Horowitz, New Rochelle, NY 10804

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commission and to have input into its important decennial work on the nature and structure of our democracy, of our representative government and of our social and economic priorities for at least the next 10 years.

I am a long time, 30+ -year resident. citizen and businessperson in New Rochelle, NY, a diverse city of immigrant, Latinx, Black, working class, middle-class and wealthy communities. In this regard, New Rochelle epitomizes the development of distinctly urban economic, social, and political development that characterizes much of the territory and population of Westchester County and the northeast Bronx. Issues of housing, public transportation, environment, economic development, healthcare, education, criminal justice with concern about diversity, equality, equity, the quality of public education, public safety, policing and green space parks and recreation are paramount and demand representation and voting power from all sectors of our diverse communities. On this basis, I oppose a redistricting proposal that separates the communities of Riverdale, Wakefield, Edenwald, Coop City and Baychester from the cities of lower Westchester—New Rochelle, Mt Vernon, and Yonkers.

Based on what I understand is the mandate of the Commission, the 16th Congressional District as currently constituted and that brings together communities of interests of New Rochelle, Mount Vernon and Yonkers, and the Northeast Bronx communities of Riverdale, Wakefield, Edenwald, Coop City, Baychester and others should not be broken-up and hence disenfranchised.

There is no question that the city areas that happen to sit within the boundaries of Westchester County and those of the Bronx that happen to be included in the boundaries of New York City have more in common with regard to the issues that have the most impact on them – housing, transportation, public education, policing, etc. -- than they do with the more northern, in some cases exurban, reaches of Westchester County in which the proposed redistricting places them.

The electoral strength of communities of color, immigrant, and working class communities of my city, New Rochelle, and of Mt Vernon and Yonkers with their common interest in jobs, housing, education, public safety, transportation and environment will be severely diluted and disenfranchised if they are electorally separated from their sisters and brothers in the Bronx communities that are currently in the 16th.. They will be disenfranchised if they are artificially joined to Rye Brook, Harrison, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington and others not currently in the 16th that have a completely different socio-economic and demographic profile and potentially conflicting interests with regard to housing, transportation and quality of life issues

Any statistical analysis based on the parameters of demographics, socioeconomics, racial and ethnic composition, etc. would unite the cities of New Rochelle, Mt. Vernon, and Yonkers with the Bronx. No amount of nostalgia or desire for the suburban myth will resurrect it. Redistricting for the next 10 years should be in line and along lines that recognize the reality of our diverse and increasingly urban communities of interest and be forward not backward thinking.

Thank you for your time and attention and for enfranchising diversity and inclusion, not separation, with an amended plan for the 16th that keeps the community of interests of New Rochelle, Coop City, Edenwald, Mt Vernon, Wakefield, Yonkers, Riverdale, Baychester, and Coop City together.

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