

My name is Josh Skaller, and I've been a resident of Park Slope for nearly 25 years. In addition, I've served as the Democratic State Committee member and the District Leader of the 52nd Assembly District for over 10 years (I resigned in 2022 when I was redistricted out of the district), been a member of Community Board 6 for many years, and been a member of the Gowanus CAG (the community engagement portion of the Gowanus superfund cleanup project). I have also served in various capacities with a number of neighborhood and citywide civic and political organizations.

The close ties I have established over the years with people and organizations across these neighborhoods leads me to testify today in opposition to the removal of much of Windsor Terrace and Kensington from the proposed IRC map of the 44th assembly district. These are communities of common interest with neighboring Park Slope, sharing a great history of overlapping civic and political institutions, elected leaders, etc. They are contiguous and compact. Moving them into the 51st assembly district would in effect create a second, much smaller community inside the 51st with divergent needs and likely create issues of civic under-representation across many aspects of life, including policing, emergency services, community board representation, school participation, and so forth. The historical precedent of combining these neighborhoods into the existing 44th Assembly District as a compact and contiguous district continues to make geographical sense.

Additionally, it was in my opinion a mistake to include portions of Carroll Gardens and Gowanus into the IRC's 2022 44th Assembly District map. These neighborhoods have an historically long membership in the 52nd Assembly District. Together with Cobble Hill, Borum Heights, Brooklyn Heights, and the neighborhoods adjacent, they form the heart of one of the most civically engaged assembly districts in the state.

The IRC was correct to remove sections of Prospect Heights currently included in the 2022 assembly district map. They are in fact separated by the Brooklyn Botanical Garden from the rest of the district. They are not truly contiguous with the rest of the district, nor do they share communities of interest; there is precious little, if any, overlap of community boards, school districts, BIDs, other elected officials, etc. I believe they should be included in a contiguous Prospect Heights district, be spared unnecessary division, and not be included in new maps of the 44th.

I do feel the IRC was correct to expand the Park Slope footprint in the current proposed map. Historically, Park Slope has shared civic, cultural, commercial, and political resources, architectural traits, schools, transportation, and recreational opportunities. It is in fact a glowing example of a vibrant Brooklyn neighborhood, best facilitated with a single shared political representative in the assembly district where possible.

I feel the included map as proposed by Assemblymember Carroll and endorsed by former Assemblymember Brennan, best exemplifies the logical lines of the 44th AD, and I urge the IRC to use it in place of the currently proposed solution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Skaller', written in a cursive style.

Josh Skaller