Redistricting Plan Testimony

I am a resident of southwest Yonkers commenting on the configuration of my state assembly district. The current 89th Assembly District consists primarily of Mount Vernon residents sweeping across Yonkers with narrow segment of southern Yonkers to incorporate southwest and western Yonkers. I understand that the configuration of the 89th District provides a majority minority constituency. However, the City of Mount Vernon is itself a majority minority city. I believe that inclusion of a relatively small slice of Yonkers is not appropriate.

The premise of geographic districts is that of commonality of interest based on location. The area adjacent to the Hudson River has different interests than that of inland Mount Vernon. Flood control, downtown Yonkers development, and school district issues are location specific. Southwest Yonkers is also home to the largest waste water treatment plant in the county and is under the jurisdiction of Westchester County and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Environmental Facilities Corporation. The Yonkers area is also served by Metro North’s Hudson line and various Bee Line bus routes which do not serve Mount Vernon. All of these issues relevant to the Yonkers community are sharply divergent from those of Mount Vernon which is geographically distant.

While it is commendable to arrange districts to give voice to Westchester’s minority communities, neglecting the importance of geographic and municipal communities does not provide the most effective community of interest. Yonkers is a far larger city, with three times the population of Mt Vernon. Further, it is not appropriate to combine diverse racial and ethnic groups into a “minority community”. Southwest and western Yonkers has a community profile distinct from that of Mt Vernon. Although the data is not yet available, based on city level data we can predict that combining the small segment of Yonkers with Mount Vernon is likely to result in under-representation of the Hispanic population living in southwestern and western Yonkers. Yonkers is just under 20 percent Black and more than one-third Hispanic compared to Mount Vernon’s 60 percent Black population and less than 20 percent Hispanic population.

The community of southwest and western Yonkers is quite large and diverse. It may even be large enough to be considered a single assembly district if properly constructed. Efforts should be made to provide a distinct voice for this community while insuring that assembly districts are roughly equal in population.