

**Testimony for Independent Districting Commission, Queens Hearing, February 16, 2023**

**Savita Prasad, Member of South Queens Women’s March**

Hello distinguished members of the Independent Redistricting Commission. My name is Savita Prasad and I am a graduate student, and an active member of South Queens Women’s March (SQWM), a local grassroots gender justice organization. Founded right before the pandemic hit, and inspired by global and national women’s rights movements, SQWM amplifies the voices of South Queens’ diverse women and gender-expansive people. We are an all-volunteer multi-generational, intersectional platform working to foster women’s empowerment through dismantling norms, practices, and institutions that support patriarchy and gender injustice.

We take our sisterhood to the streets to unify women and gender non-conforming individuals in our community and connect them to the tools and resources necessary to empower their own lives and thrive. That includes fighting food insecurity and period poverty; tackling gender based violence via healthy relationships and art healing workshops, promoting empowerment through youth and professional development, and promoting civic engagement and building political power. To that end, SQWM is a proud member of APA Voice’s Redistricting Task Force.

I have resided in the Hollis/Jamaica area for almost 30 years. I currently live in Assembly District 29 which is composed of an Asian population of 16.4%. I oppose the IRC draft map for Assembly District 26 which would place me in Assembly District 33 that has an Asian population of 11.1%. I support the APA VOICE Proposal Map for the Hillside Corridor that will unite neighborhoods that comprise 44.5% Asian population.

Hillside Avenue has become a hallmark of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean businesses, creating a consumer market for ethnic grocery stores, cultural clothing stores, and places of worship where myself and others of the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean community frequents. Many of my friends and family live in Queens Village as well. We hardly go below Jamaica Avenue. On rare occasions I have traveled to Bayside, but have never traveled to Auberndale, Little Neck, or Douglaston.

The map for the Hillside Corridor will combine the South Asian diaspora living in Briarwood, Jamaica Hills (comprised mostly of the Bangladeshi community) and Jamaica Estates, Hollis and Queens Village (comprised mostly of the Indo-Caribbean community), Bellerose, Glen Oaks, and Floral Park (comprised mostly of the Punjabi community). These neighborhoods have been voting for candidates of the South Asian diaspora for several years and placing these neighborhoods in the same district will allow us to elect a candidate of our choice.

Today, I testify in support of the APA VOICE Proposal Map for the Hillside Corridor. It is critical that this map become the final map because it keeps us as close to the whole as possible.

Separately, much of the work done by SQWM is in the Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and Ozone Park neighborhoods. For these neighborhoods, we fully and wholeheartedly support the maps that the IRC recently proposed. We renew the same calls we as an organization echoed for the past year in regards to this area: **please don’t divide us - keep our communities of interest together.** The State Assembly lines for Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park were particularly egregious where we were divided into at least 7 districts - Assembly Districts 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32 and 38. Things have gotten better since then and we know that the IRC has heard our voices as we saw the maps you released finally - after three decades of advocacy - keeping this community of interest whole. We are so grateful for this and ask that this map remain the same in your final deliberations.

Thank you to the entire commission and your staff.

