January 10, 2023

Independent Redistricting Commission

Re: 135th Assembly District

Dear Commissioners:

I write to urge you to keep the current 135th Assembly District in its current form. It is a coherent and compact district which keeps communities of interest intact and brings together communities of similar and overlapping interests.

I currently represent portions of East Rochester and Perinton in the Monroe County Legislature. All of my life I have lived and worked in the current 135th AD and I know it well.

The 135th is a district of strong and historic communities. Its four villages are hubs of their larger towns. Pittsford and Fairport villages are model canaltowns, with thriving recreational, shopping, and commercial activity. Their similarities make their slightly different assets even more interesting to visitors from near and far. East Rochester, my hometown, provides diversity in housing affordability and has transitioned from an industrial center to a walkable village with a blossoming restaurant scene. Honeoye Falls, another historic village, anchors the southern edge of the 135th and thrives as a walkable hub for its agricultural and residential region of Monroe County.

These villages require strong advocacy in the legislature. They are older in terms of their critical infrastructure than are the suburbs that grew around them. Their interests overlap: they need support for their active transportation plans, support for infrastructure. Three of the villages are located on waterways that present constant infrastructure challenges. Because villages contain much property tax-exempt property – especially schools, parks, libraries, and churches that serve residents beyond their village limits – they need an advocate who understands the special role of villages in their surrounding communities and the revenue challenges they face. With four villages – each a jewel in its way – in the 135th AD, the legislator representing the district can bring a deep understanding of their shared interests to her or his advocacy in the legislature.

Two economic corridors dominate eastern Monroe County: the Interstate 90/490 corridor and the Route 104 corridor. The Interstate 90/490 corridor is the primary economic driver and runs through the heart of the current 135th Assembly District. What significant growth Monroe County and Ontario County have seen in recent decades has been along this corridor, most of that growth coming outside and on the border of the 135th Assembly District. Residents of the current 135th AD have a shared interest in the land management, recreational opportunities, historic preservation, economic development, and green space preservation issues that come with the development of this corridor.

The Town of Webster, which was formerly in the 135th AD, anchors the Route 104 economic corridor which functions as a gateway to Lake Ontario, Sodus Bay, Port Bay, Oswego, the Tug Hill, the 1,000 Islands and the Adirondacks. While Webster shares much as a community of interest with Penfield, Perinton, and Pittsford in terms of its scale and demographics, the current redistricting plan recognizes its role as a community of interest with the towns along the southern border of Lake Ontario which straddle the Route 104 economic corridor and places Webster in the 130th Assembly District. Especially in economic, environmental, and recreational terms, the current plan makes sense. Because the towns on the eastern border of Monroe County – Webster, Penfield, Perinton, Pittsford, and Mendon – exceed in aggregate the population of an assembly district, map drawers must consider which town [s] will stand outside the 135th AD. The current districts as they pertain to these towns make sense.

Top of mind for many if not most residents in the current 135th AD is public education. Public education is the most costly item our government provides. And the most important. As a teacher for 46 years, a leader of the Fairport Teachers for 30, and as a parent and grandparent, I share a deep commitment to public education with my neighbors and colleagues. Advocacy for school districts which share a common interest and similar challenges will always be a top issue for the assemblyperson representing the 135th AD.

It’s important to understand the history of the public schools in eastern Monroe County. They grew outward into the rural areas around the villages of East Rochester, Fairport, Pittsford, and the hamlet of Penfield. Before the population boom of the late 60s, Penfield High, Fairport High, East Rochester High, and Pittsford High were located within a three mile circle. Although that Fairport High is now Minerva DeLand School and that Pittsford High is now Pittsford Sutherland, the center of these four school districts is still [and all four district offices] within that three mile circle. These four school districts share a history of serving overlapping constituencies: many Pittsford schools residents live in the Town of Perinton and the Town of Mendon; Penfield schools residents also live in Perinton; East Rochester schools serve residents of ER as well as residents of Perinton and Pittsford. The students who attend these four school districts, as well as students who attend Honeoye-Falls Lima schools, work together, compete together athletically, make music together, and socialize together.

When the Pittsford schools built their second high school and called it Pittsford Mendon, they recognized the growth of residential development in Mendon, the rural gem of southeastern Monroe County. As the HFL schools developed around the village of Honeoye Falls and the Village of Lima, much of the culture of that school district developed from the residential changes to the Town of Mendon. These overlapping elements of towns and school districts are one of the reasons why the 135th Assembly District’s current configuration makes so much sense. All of these overlapping elements and interests come together under one jurisdiction in the form of the advocacy provided to them by the legislator in the 135th Assembly District.

The school districts in the 135th Assembly District are some of the strongest performing public schools in the state and nation. Keeping them together in this district makes immense sense.

I had hoped to speak at your hearing tonight but because the Monroe County Legislature meets tonight I cannot do so. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to provide written testimony. Should you like to ask any follow up questions please feel free to call me at 315-521-1396.

Thank you for undertaking this important work.

Sincerely,

John B. Baynes

Monroe County Legislator – 18th Legislative District

52 Westwood Drive

East Rochester, New York 14445