

March 31, 2023

Subject Line: Opposition to the State proposal for Redistricting Roosevelt Island

To: Members of the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission

Thank you for considering Roosevelt Island's needs when determining the redistricting map for New York State's Assembly. I strongly oppose the current proposal which removes Roosevelt Island from Manhattan's District 76 and places it in Queens District 36.

New York State's redistricting rules require:

Districts must consist of contiguous territory and shall be as compact in form as possible.

Our Manhattan Island's contiguous territory is Manhattan, not Queens.

The proposed change to our district is sprawling, not compact.

The commission must take into account the maintenance of existing districts, pre-existing political subdivisions, including counties, cities, towns, and communities of interest.

Roosevelt Island is being severed from long established communities of interest. Our political subdivision is not being respected.

The City Charter of New York City recognizes Roosevelt Island as a Manhattan community. The Constitution of New York State specifically provides two State legislators for each district, a Senator and an Assembly Member. Roosevelt Island, a Manhattan community, has a unique form of local governance. We are governed by an unelected, State appointed Public Benefit Corporation, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corp (RIOCI). All of our local services are administered by RIOCI, not by New York City. The Board of Directors for RIOCI is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor of NY. Because of this unique relationship with the State of NY, in which our residents do not have a voting voice in their local government, it is imperative that we, a Manhattan community, have the combined efforts of both of our Manhattan based representatives, working together on our behalf, to provide us with responsive and fair dealing by RIOCI.

Our tramway is operated by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOCI) to link residents with Manhattan destinations. All maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements must be made by this state agency by connecting with mainstream Manhattan authorities. It is not part of the MTA system. Our tramway is a vital transportation link that is used each day by commuters in order to get to work, and by school children, most of whom attend school in mainland Manhattan. It has no connection to Queens and is of no consequence to a Queens Assembly Member.

Many of our children go to public and private schools in Manhattan, not Queens. PS/IS 217, the only public school in our community, is only available on a limited basis to children through the

8th grade. Confirmed by the school's principal, Mandana Beckman, the school can only accommodate 33 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Therefore, the vast majority of our public, middle school children attend District 2 schools in Manhattan. The mandated DOE District 2 school, which has the highest volume of Roosevelt Island middle schoolers, is Robert S. Wagner Middle School, located on 76th Street. In addition, PS/IS 217 can only accommodate 15 of our 3K children, and 36 PreK2 children. The majority of our early learners, who PS/IS 217 cannot accommodate, attend DOE District 2 schools. Our District 76 Assembly Members have all had long, established relationships with schools in our required school district. We need to retain this invaluable Manhattan "community of interest."

Lastly, Cornell, a NY State land grant institution, occupies several acres of Roosevelt Island. Two thirds of their land will soon be developed. Our community needs to insure Cornell's adherence to the policies that were established by NY State, Manhattan Community Board 8, and City Council. We need the strong oversight achieved by having both of our Manhattan-based State legislators working alongside our Manhattan City Council Member and Community Board 8, to support the protections granted in the Manhattan ULURP process for Cornell's upcoming construction.

In view of all these I strongly oppose the current proposal to remove Roosevelt Island from Manhattan District 76 to Queens District 36.

Yours Sincerely,
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USA