

Testimony in Support of APA VOICE Proposed Map for Assembly District 30

My name is Micah Dicker and I work at the Center for the Integration and Advancement of New Americans (CIANA), a nonprofit that serves AAPI immigrants, particularly South Asian and Middle Eastern communities. We support APA VOICE's proposed changes to the IRC draft map for Assembly District 30 because the Asian American communities that CIANA serves in Jackson Heights, Woodside, and Elmhurst should not be separated politically.

There is a significant South Asian community from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, as well as Nepal and Tibet, centered around 74th Street in Jackson Heights. Yet, the blocks north of 74th Street, particularly on Roosevelt Avenue and 37th Avenue, are not included in District 30, neither in the current map nor the IRC's draft map. Additionally, many of the Tibetan and Nepali communities who live in Jackson Heights are not part of the district, whereas their neighbors in Woodside are.

Each of these cultures are distinct but share many similarities. Their communities likewise face many of the same challenges on both sides of the district line: gentrification, which has caused many local small businesses to close after years of serving the community; decreased availability of affordable housing; rent increases that have priced out many long-time residents; and more.

Impacted communities cannot get the relief, resources, and benefits they need to remedy these problems when they are not in the same district and cannot jointly speak out to the same district leaders. CBOs that serve them, like CIANA, cannot receive adequate funding from elected officials when their client populations are not significantly accounted for in a single district.

APA VOICE's proposed changes to the District 30 map offer a direct remedy: they expand the district's coverage of Jackson Heights up to 79th Street on Roosevelt Avenue, 35th Road, and 35th Avenue to include more of the South Asian community; expand slightly to the northwest to include the bulk of Woodside's Tibetan community, including the Tibetan Community Center, and lastly, eliminate the portion south of the Long Island Expressway in order to expand eastward to include more of Elmhurst and its diverse East Asian community.

If approved, APA VOICE's proposed map will bring together diverse AAPI communities into a single, unified District 30, thereby creating a stronger, louder voice to speak out against the threats to their communities. We hold power in numbers and we will not stand alone or be silenced. We hope the IRC will address our concerns through meaningful action.