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*Supervisor*

December 6, 2021

Chairman David Imamura, Esq.  
Independent Redistricting Commission  
250 Broadway, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Imamura and Commissioners:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Independent Redistricting Commission of New York State about an issue that is of extreme importance to the Town of Ramapo

I am proud to represent nearly 150,000 people from all walks of life who live in the Town of Ramapo, which is the most populous town in New York State outside of Long Island.

Despite its incredible diversity and its rather large population, both of which set our Town apart and make it unique in so many ways, our Town is inexplicably divided into multiple Assembly Districts. In fact, our Town's population base is certainly large enough to warrant us being placed into one single Assembly District that is wholly contained within the Town. However, the Town of Ramapo is regrettably carved up into several different districts, which does a tremendous disservice to Ramapo residents and sends a disturbing message that their diverse needs are somehow not as important as the powerful political forces that may be at play at the state level.

It is nonsensical that the Town of Ramapo is divided into three separate Assembly Districts (AD 96, AD 97 and AD 98). One of those districts, which contains approximately one-third of our Town's population, is actually combined with Orange County, a fact that is quite enigmatic.

As a result of this inexplicable split, Ramapo residents are inherently disenfranchised, and their voices are needlessly diluted. We do not have a single Assemblymember who can proudly call the Town of Ramapo their own, and not one Assemblymember feels like Ramapo is "theirs." Ramapo has in essence become an afterthought for our local Assemblymembers, none of whom even has a district office located within the Town.

From a legal, constitutional, and common-sense perspective, the Town of Ramapo's fragmentation when it comes to representation in the State Assembly is completely irrational. Pursuant to the New York State Constitution, a municipality should not be split

up into different parts in the context of legislative districts whenever possible. In light of that constitutional provision and taking into account the size of our Town, Ramapo should unquestionably comprise one entire Assembly District.

The Town's placement into multiple Assembly Districts has an adverse fiscal impact on our Town, as financial assistance from the Assembly for Ramapo has been virtually non-existent over the past decade. In addition, as home to a particularly diverse population that is comprised of large Haitian, Hispanic, Latino and Orthodox enclaves, our residents often have divergent needs and concerns. The lack of a single Assemblymember that all Ramapo families can turn to for assistance with a myriad of issues, and the absence of a dedicated Assemblymember who understands them, cares about them, and can focus on them, is inequitable and injurious.

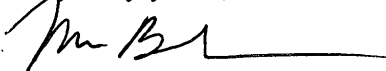
Following the deadly antisemitic attack in the Town of Ramapo in December 2019, in which a man brandishing a machete entered a rabbi's home during a Hanukkah celebration and stabbed five people, there was an outpouring of love, concern and assistance from a broad spectrum of people. We received help from the Governor and the Senate, as they immediately recognized the need to combat bigotry and take steps to ensure that such a tragedy does not occur again. Sadly, the Assembly was conspicuously absent during that terrible time. I have no doubt that if the Town had one dedicated Assemblymember that represented us, he or she would have been there for us in our time of need.

Enclosed please find a proposed map for Assembly District 97, which would more equitably represent the Town of Ramapo and its population. As the Independent Redistricting Commission of New York State embarks on the process of redrawing our state's legislative district lines, it is my sincere hope that the members of this esteemed body will bear in mind the issues and concerns that I have raised in my remarks, whether they be legal, financial or sociological in nature. The Town of Ramapo deserves better than we have gotten in the past, and it is time for this Commission to duly address the inequity that exists and remedy the injustice that has subsisted for far too long.

We are one Town, one community and one family, and we should absolutely be one Assembly District as well. Dividing the Town of Ramapo into more than one Assembly District yet again would unnecessarily perpetuate the unjust imbalance in representation at the state level that adversely affects our residents and our Town. I respectfully request that you do the right thing and finally allow the Town of Ramapo to have the forceful and fervent voice in the State Assembly that we rightfully deserve.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak and for your consideration of my remarks.

Very truly yours,



Michael B. Specht