

Redistricting Written Testimony

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OVERVIEW

Many thanks to the New York Independent Redistricting Commission for the opportunity to provide in-person and written feedback on the proposed maps for the Southeast Queens communities. My name is Gloria Boyce-Charles, and I am Vice-Chair of the Eastern Queens Alliance and a long-time resident of the community, having moved here from Brooklyn in 1975. At the time, our home was classified as part of the Rosedale community. In various stages we went from Rosedale to Jamaica to Springfield Gardens. Today we are known as the Brookville community. So, I am familiar with the fluidity of the lines in our Southeast Queens communities.

During my in-person testimony, I highlighted a few points about my own Assembly District 31 and Congressional District 5 maps. This written testimony will restate those points and emphasize the importance of keeping our Southeast Queens communities together. These communities include Brookville, Queens Village, Cambria Heights, Hollis, Jamaica, Laurelton, Springfield Gardens, St. Albans/Addisleigh Park, Rosedale, and parts of Far Rockaway. These communities are currently served by the New York Assembly Districts 29, 31, 32, and 33; Senatorial Districts 10 and 14 and Congressional District 5. ***I ask that you not split up our communities and align them with Nassau communities to the east. I further ask that you keep the JFK International Airport under the jurisdiction of the AD, Senatorial and Congressional Districts that are assigned to the Brookville community, as this is the community that sits closest to the mouth of the runways and is thus most affected by the airport and related air cargo operations. The Brookville community should remain intact and should not be split across districts.***

Assembly District Maps

With respect to the redistricting of AD 31, I favor the Names/ JFKRKWY map, with some critical exceptions. I will focus these exceptions on the impacts to the Brookville and Rosedale communities.

In the JFKRKWY map, you split up the Brookville community by ending the district line on the east at around 229th St and 147th Ave and you remove Brookville Park. As a point of information, the Eastern border of the Brookville community should extend as far east

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as Brookville Blvd and as far north as the South Conduit. On the west, the Brookville community should extend to include Springfield Park. To our south is the JFK International Airport. ***The Brookville community should remain intact and should not be split out across multiple districts.***

In your Names assembly district map, the areas east of and including Brookville Park that you have removed, along with Rosedale, would align with Nassau County communities and become part of the Elmont district. This is problematic on several levels. Residents within the Southeast Queens communities are part of an environmental justice community. In particular, the Brookville community and the south-western neighborhoods within Rosedale live closest to the JFK airport runways and bear the greatest environmental burdens of that industry. This is particularly true of the Brookville community, which also contains trucking warehouses that support the air cargo industry that is associated with the airport. By putting part of the Brookville community and all of the Rosedale community into the Elmont district, which is comprised significantly of Nassau County neighborhoods, you have dismantled communities that share critical quality of life, health and safety interests and concerns with those in the JFKRKWY community that is immediately to their west. These communities have much less in common with the residents of Nassau County. And because Nassau County and NYC boroughs operate under distinctly different administrations, this will place an undue and unfair burden on the elected official who must meet the needs of two very distinct constituencies. At the end of the day, the real losers will be the constituents. Furthermore, by disassociating Brookville Park from that District, you have placed an integral part of the Brookville and Rosedale communities under a separate jurisdiction. Brookville Park is a much-used, valuable, and indeed treasured resource within these communities. Along with Springfield Park on the western side of the Brookville community, it is the go-to location for family activity, community events, an emerging farmers market, local youth athletic league games and so much more. It is also part of the Idlewild Park complex, for which the Eastern Queens Alliance serves as steward.

At the very least, the Names JFKRKWY district should extend into the Rosedale community, perhaps even extending just a little bit more east to incorporate the Idlewild Park Canoe and Kayak launch, (located on Huxley and Craft) again, for which the Eastern Queens Alliance serves a steward. ***Ideally, the JFKRKWY district should encompass as much of Rosedale as feasible.*** If Rosedale must continue to be split across districts (as today it is shared by AD29 and AD31), then it should be aligned with other Southeast Queens communities, and not with Nassau County.

Unfortunately, there is much “not to love” about the Letters AD AD proposed map. In that map, on the west, we are losing Springfield Park, thus breaking up the Brookville area, which should extend as far west as to include Springfield Park. Once again, the

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Brookville community and the associated Brookville Park are being split out on the east, and along with Rosedale, is being aligned with the Nassau Counties of Cedarhurst, Lawrence, Inwood, and Woodmere. We are also losing all of Ozone Park. In this scenario, there is a significant change in the voting demographic, which will very likely decrease the chance for representation that best reflects the compelling sustainability issues of those who live in the Brookville and Rosedale communities that are closest to the JFK airport.

It is critical that the Commission consider the significant quality of life and health issues faced by the residents of the communities currently known as Southeast Queens. As environmental justice communities, these concerns differ quantitatively and qualitatively from those of the people in Nassau County, especially with respect to the issues posed by their proximity to the JFK International Airport.

As communities of color and neighborhoods located closest to the mouth of the JFK runways, we deserve and have a legal right to representation that reflects our communities. Such representation is at risk with the implementation of the AD AD Letters Assembly map. I find the Letter AD AD proposed map to be totally unacceptable.

Congressional District Maps

Regarding the proposed maps for Congressional District 5, I am very concerned about the Names Congressional maps, which split CD 5 into two districts.

The QNSBLLMR district on the North side, cuts off at the Brookville community on its southern border, and expands east as far as Rockville Centre, Malverne, Hempstead and Freeport. The JFK5TWNS picks up at the JFK airport and combines with parts of CD4 to include Hewlett and Cedarhurst, going out as far east as Long Beach. In these scenarios, CD5 loses Hollis, Queens Village and Richmond Hill to the North. Even more shockingly, it loses Idlewild Park and possibly the hiking trail and the new environmental center. These are environmental assets that the Eastern Queens Alliance has been deeply committed to rehabilitating and establishing, and for which EQA serves as steward. In this scenario, CD5 also loses JFK Airport.

The disassociation of the JFK Airport from Southeast Queens, and most specifically, the Brookville community is of absolute critical concern to Southeast Queens, and in particular to those Brookville residents who live directly to the north of the airport/at the

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mouth of the runways. And ***by aligning the airport with Nassau County communities this map totally changes the voting demographics, making it unlikely that the Southeast Queens residents who bear the greatest burdens from the airport industry will ever have elected officials who will advocate for their compelling and urgent interests and needs. This is unacceptable.***

Congressional Letters Map (CD L) on the other hand, appears more acceptable. The district keeps the Brookville Community intact and retains the JFK Airport and Idlewild Park resources. Voting demographics of populations remain somewhat consistent between the current and the proposed letters CD L plan. The downside to this plan is that it disassociates Queens Village and Hollis from the CD, aligning these communities with Nassau County. I would suggest that in order to keep the Southeast Queens communities together, ***the Congressional District should not lose Queens Village and Hollis.*** Instead, I would suggest curtailing the proposed expansion on the west into communities that are currently in the CD8 district.

Thank you for your time, attention, and dedication to this critical effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Boyce-Charles

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