March 6, 2023

Re: New York State Independent Redistricting Commission

To Whom It May Concern:

As a longtime resident of the East Buffalo/West Cheektowaga community, I write to you today to urge the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission not to divide our neighborhood into separate Assembly Districts. I’m acutely aware of the close-knit ties binding our community, having grown up attending the Cheektowaga-Sloan school district and residing in the Lovejoy neighborhood for the past 8 years. In fact, I was attracted to reside in this neighborhood not because it is similar or close to the community that I grew up in, but because it *is* the community I grew up in.

Residents of Sloan, Lovejoy, and neighboring areas of Cheektowaga and Buffalo share much more than a border. My neighbors utilize the same community centers, shopping plazas, churches, parks, and small businesses, regardless of which side of the city line they are on. Most longtime residents are intimately familiar with institutions like Camillo’s Sloan Super Market and the Broadway Market, with public amenities like Hennepin Senior Center and Sloan Community Center, and with parks like Griffith Park and the Lincoln Field House. Though we are separated by a municipal border on a map, in reality we are physically separated from other parts of Cheektowaga and Buffalo by infrastructure, including a rail yard, thruways, and railroad tracks in every direction. That is why we have gotten the nickname Iron Island. This geographic isolation gives our neighborhood a unique and cohesive character, which is notably different from other areas of Buffalo or Cheektowaga. It simply makes no sense to split a continuous, close-knit community like Sloan-Lovejoy into separate and vastly different Assembly districts.

Furthermore, I’m concerned about the IRC’s proposal to split our community and enjoin Sloan with rural and exurban areas that have very different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics. Sloan-Lovejoy is a working class neighborhood, where many residents struggle with poverty, whereas eastern Lancaster is far more wealthy. Sloan-Lovejoy is an urban neighborhood that features a mix of homeowners and renters, motorists and public transit riders; eastern Lancaster mainly features single-family zoning and has almost no public transit service. Sloan-Lovejoy is a multi-racial neighborhood populated by white, Black, and Asian residents, including a significant immigrant population. As a result, our neighborhood has unique institutions to serve these groups, including Catholic churches and Slavic eateries that cater to our large Polish population, as well as mosques and halal grocers/restaurants that serve our growing Muslim community. By contrast, eastern Lancaster is predominantly white and lacks sizable communities of ethnic, racial, or religious minorities.

Sloan and Lovejoy are clearly one continuous community — a working-class, multi-ethnic neighborhood with a shared history, and brought closer by our geographic isolation from other areas. Should the IRC split this community into separate Assembly Districts, you will make it more likely that many of our neighbors will be represented by an Assembly member who will not prioritize our community’s unique needs and interests. For all these reasons, I urge you to keep our community whole in the new Assembly maps.

Thank you,

Jeremy Sasiadek

Resident of Lovejoy in Assembly District 143