



**SOUTHERN TIER
WRITTEN TESTIMONY**



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

January 20, 2023

Attention: Submissions
Independent Redistricting Commission
250 Broadway, 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Jenkins and Commission Members,

Thank you for your work on the Independent Redistricting Commission to create fair and equitable districts in New York that keep communities of interest united. It has been an honor to serve constituents of the 125th Assembly District, and I am pleased that the majority of the District remains largely intact. There are, however, notable exceptions.

In the draft map, three towns would be removed from the 125th District into the 126th District: Harford, Virgil, and Lapeer. These are distinct communities whose economic interests are closely aligned with the geographic areas to the west boundary of Interstate 81. These communities' economic development is highly correlated to the City of Cortland, which will remain in the 125th district. As the City of Cortland and Cortland County continue to improve services, such as public transportation, these more rural areas would also benefit. Keeping these towns connected to the economic hub of the County, which includes Greek Peak Mountain Resort as an attraction and community resource for the towns of Virgil, Harford and Lapeer, at the northern border of the District, remains in their best interest.

Additionally, Cortland, Virgil, Harford, and Dryden are the central catchment area both for students and staff as well as for services for Tompkins Cortland Community College, a regional community college maintained and supported by both Tompkins and Cortland Counties. Keeping these areas intact serves the college, which is an important center of workforce development for both Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

A significant number of the children in Virgil and Harford attend school in the 125th Assembly District. Some of the students from both the towns of Virgil and Harford attend school in the Dryden Central school District in Tompkins County. Additionally, all the students in the Hamlet of Virgil attend school in the Cortland Enlarged school district.

School districts are by definition, communities of interest. Dividing each of these school districts into multiple Assembly districts will create unnecessary administrative and financial difficulties both for the school districts and families. Staying within the 125th District maintains continuity of representation that has existed for several decades, and secures the educational and economic needs of the residents of both Virgil and Harford.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments to the Commission on this important process and urge you to maintain the integrity of the current 125th Assembly district. We look forward to the public hearings.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna R. Kelles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'K'.

Dr. Anna R. Kelles
NYS Assemblymember
125th District