

To: Chair David Imumura and Members of the Independent Redistricting Committee
From: Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D.

Date: November 24, 2021

Re: South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, Richmond Hill-Queens

Requests-Keep Redistricting Draft Map AL-State Assembly Map

Revise Redistricting Draft Map P as in Peter (Howard Beach is not a Community of Interest with Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill. South Ozone should be joined with Ozone Park and Richmond Hill, not Howard Beach.

Dear Chair Imumura and Commissioners of the Redistricting Committee,

Good Evening. Thank you for your hard and tedious work in trying to meet the needs of drawing fair Redistricting Lines.

I am Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D., a resident of South Ozone Park, Queens for over 36 years. I am and a newly Retired New York City Department of Education Teacher. I am a dedicated and engaged member of the South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill Community. As an elementary school teacher, I have taught multiple elementary school grades in numerous schools in South Ozone Park, Queens where students are mostly Guyanese and Trinidadians.

I am a pioneer in many ways. I was a part of the first wave of Guyanese people to come the United States, specifically, Queens, New York. I immigrated from Guyana to New York City in 1977. Guyanese people have been steadily immigrating to New York City since the 1970s. I take pride in being a part of that first wave of Guyanese immigrants. Guyanese, specifically Indo-Guyanese have settled in South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill. Guyanese people have been in New York City for over 40 years. According to a 2019 American Community survey by the US Census Bureau, Guyanese-Americans are the fifth largest immigrant population in New York City, and the second largest immigrant population in Queens, and yet there has never been a Guyanese representative for State Assembly. There are over 140,000 Guyanese in New York City with the highest concentration being in South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill, and yet they have never had a Guyanese representative in this city. Guyanese people have worked hard in this country, and in this city.

In the 1980s, it was the efforts of Guyanese immigrant business owners and entrepreneurs who invested their time, dedication and money into starting their own local businesses along Liberty Avenue, in Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and in surrounding areas. They started businesses that spoke to the needs of the Guyanese community. Guyanese businesses and industry revitalized Liberty Avenue and the surrounding areas in the 1980s. What used to be an economically depressed areas, filled with high crimes and drug dealings, Guyanese business owners and members of the community transformed. We have raised children in Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and surrounding areas. We have become professionals, we have boosted the New York City economy, and finally after 40 years of being in New York City, Guyanese people were finally recognized by New York City, a few months ago when Liberty Avenue was renamed by Mayor DiBlasio as Little Guyana. It was a long time coming and a good start. I compliment you for your work with the Redistricting Draft Map AL (District Assembly) in which you attempted to join communities of interests, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill, but there is still inherent problem with the Redistricting Map Draft P as in Peter for State Senate with which Guyanese will still not be given a voice and appropriate representation.

Redistricting Draft Map P as in Peter for State Senate is not representative communities with common interests or issues. Ozone Park and Richmond Hill in Map P as in Peter was joined with Howard Beach. This is not communities of common interests. South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill should be joined, since they are homogenous and have the highest concentration of Guyanese-Americans, and Guyanese, and are distinctly different communities from Howard Beach. Howard Beach is comprised largely of Italians and Italian- Americans who are predominantly Catholic, more affluent, and more politically conservative than South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill. South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill is made up of mostly Indo -Guyanese, and Indo-Guyanese Americans who are largely working-class multigenerational families. Within the Indo-Guyanese community, the majority are Hindus, a smaller percentage are Muslims, and an even smaller percentage are Christians. The Guyanese community must deal with issues of race, immigration, health needs, and social struggles that members of Howard Beach do not have. I ask that Redistricting Draft Map P as in Peter be redrafted to replace Howard Beach. Howard Beach should be removed, and South Ozone Park joined with Ozone Park and Richmond Hill for better representation for the large Guyanese, and Guyanese-Americans. Currently Guyanese people do not have representation when joined with Howard Beach, or if Howard Beach remains joined with Ozone Park and Richmond Hill.

Revising Map P as in Peter by joining South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill and redistrict Howard Beach will allow us to have an elected representative from our community in place, so that we could have representation for the people of our community. We have never had an elected representative and representation for the people of our community. With us having representation, we have a source to make our voices heard. Schools can hire more teachers from our community which is much needed in the South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill Community. For example, in our South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, Richmond Hill community, in a school with about 1,250 students and about 60 or more teachers you may find none, one or less than five teachers from our community in any given school, although in Our South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill community, our own graduates have graduated with degrees in teaching from York College-CUNY-Queens, Queens College-CUNY-Queens, and St. John's University in Queens. Also, it is necessary for parents to have a voice for all students, those who need help one to one, or small group instructions to address their needs as well as addressing the need for providing programs and opportunities for those students who are excelling with good grades. Currently, parents have little or no input for opportunities for those who are excelling. Many of our immigrant parents make serious decisions and give up many pleasures to instill a good education for their children. With the political scene filled with changes in the Gifted and Talented Programs, and Specialized High School Admissions processes, our parents need to have a voice which can be strengthened when we have an elected representative from our community to join us in addressing our high functioning children's need as well.

Additionally, our community members are law abiding. We appreciate the work police officers do, and we respect the law, however we have little connections if any with or police precincts, and therefore minimal outreach regarding the needs of the people of our community. This is due to the fact that we do not have an elected representative who can address our needs, and cultural values. Our students need safety patrols at dismissal.

This first and historic work of drawing Redistricting lines by your Independent Commission is very significant and has far reaching effects. It will tell how people will live in their communities for the next ten years or more. Today, the quality of life in communities has declined. One step that you can make is to draw fair redistricting lines so that people have fair representation, and representatives who can relate to their issues, interests, and needs.

I ask that you revise Redistricting Draft Map P as in Peter (State Senate), where Howard Beach is not joined with Ozone Park and Richmond Hill. South Ozone Park should be joined with Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill because there is a large Guyanese-American and Guyanese population with the same common issues and needs and when joined form a community with the same interests and issues. Thank you for reading my testimony and valuing our need that Howard Beach should not be joined with Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill. South Ozone Park should be combined with Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill to form a Community of Interest. Also, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill should be joined as your Current Redistricting Draft Map AL-District Assembly indicates. Thank you for your hard work in this historic process in working to draw fair Redistricting Lines for Fair representation, particularly for the long-forgotten immigrant groups as many of the testimonies pointed out. Please see Attachment #1-Suggested Revised Redistricting Draft Map P

Sincerely,

Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D.

Dr. Minewattie Gaya din Ali Ed.D.

Attachment #1
Recommended Revised Redistricting
Draft map P

Exclude Howard Beach
from Richmond Hill, South
Ozone Park and Ozone Park
in State Senate district
-Make 1 community of interest

