My name is Linda Turner. I vote in Election District 60, Congressional District 1 in the Town of Brookhaven.

Brookhaven Town has a strong shared community of interest based on historical, economic, scientific, academic, environmental and cultural interests. Splitting the Town into two Congressional Districts as proposed under the Congressional Letter Draft would cause irreparable harm and undercut our economy, civic institutions, and feelings of shared history and current purpose.

From the North Shore to the South, Brookhaven Town shares a proud history dating back to the mid-1600s. Our primarily agrarian roots and long tradition as fishermen and whalers shaped who we are today: pro-environment, protective of our farmers, and fierce guardians of our parks, beaches and shores. The feisty, independent ethos of small yeoman farmers and independent fishermen that inspired the famous Setauket-based Culper Spy Ring of Brookhaven residents who risked their lives for George Washington remains a defining characteristic of the community.

Coram, the oldest community in central Brookhaven Town, contributed its Light Dragoons to work with the Culper Spy Ring on acts of sabotage against the British and subsequently became the meeting place of the Brookhaven Town government for 10 years. The Congressional Draft Letter plan would split Coram, the oldest settlement in central Brookhaven, in two. Ronkonkoma, which is a key transportation hub for Brookhaven Town commuters and residents, would likewise be divided. Considering the money spent to make Ronkonkoma a thriving community hub, the division seems doubly perverse.

Today Brookhaven Town is home to two renowned research centers, SUNY Stony Brook and Brookhaven National Laboratory. Combined, these two research centers are about 50% of the town's top ten employer's employee count. After WWII, scientists and academics from the two institutions revitalized communities from Bellport in the south to the Three Village area in the north. The two institutions fostered a townwide commitment to education, embrace of scientific innovation, and civic engagement that remains a vital shared outlook.

Splitting Brookhaven Town’s two most dynamic and renowned research institutions into two Congressional Districts would hurt their shared academic and scientific research and have a negative impact on the economic stimulus they bring to the town. The scientific and research communities at Stony Brook and BNL—and the many employees throughout Brookhaven Town that they support—benefit from having one member of Congress advocate for them and prioritize their mutual needs. In fact, their ties are numerous and inseparable:

* Stony Brook is a partner in Brookhaven Science Associates LLC, managing Brookhaven National Lab for the Department of Energy.
* Brookhaven Science Associates (BSA) was established for the sole purpose of managing and operating Brookhaven National Laboratory. Formed as a partnership between Battelle Memorial Institute and The Research Foundation of SUNY on behalf of Stony Brook University (SBU), BSA is the legal entity responsible for leading BNL successfully through the 21st century.
* Stony Brook is the single largest user of BNL facilities; BNL facilities and its scientific staff are essential to the vitality of the university's intellectual life and to the impact of many of its research programs. BNL and the University share an increasing number of joint faculty appointments.
* Stony Brook and Brookhaven National Lab have formalized collaborations that form communities of interest in educational, economic, and intellectual research. It is critical that this complex, major economic engine has the benefit of effective representation in Washington, DC, from one member of Congress.

Moreover, the proposed division would split Stony Brook’s incubators, leaving its Research and Development Park and the Long Island Tech Incubator in one congressional district and its Calverton Incubator in another.

Splitting Brookhaven Town into two Congressional Districts would also undermine the shared interests and improvement efforts of Brookhaven Town’s African American communities which have both been historically plagued by political “cracking” and disenfranchisement. Their common purpose to address historical wrongs through Town-wide civic organizations like the Brookhaven NAACP would be severely hampered.

Likewise, the membership of many of Brookhaven Town’s most trusted and effective civic organizations like the Brookhaven League of Women Voters would be split apart, endangering our progress on good government reforms and environmental cleanup.

Finally, a commonality of economic realities characterize Brookhaven Town’s north and south shores. Tourism is a major part of Brookhaven’s north and south shore economies, especially during the summer months, which brings a shared commonality of challenges as well as economic benefit. The surge in tourists benefits Main Street businesses, cultural institutions, and small and organic farmers in the surrounding areas, but it means increased seasonal strain on infrastructure and unpredictable vulnerability during off-season months and economic downturns. Proposed solutions for shared environmental degradation problems, shore erosion and pollution would also be undermined.

In the mid-19th century, the villages of Port Jefferson in the north and Patchogue in the south prospered as shipbuilding ports and remain Brookhaven Town’s largest communities. Both subsequently suffered economic downturns but now, thanks to affordable housing and mixed-use projects, small businesses, and cultural centers, they are once again becoming thriving communities. These regional projects on the two coasts are of critical importance to the economic success of the wider town and would thus benefit from remaining in the same Congressional District.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

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