



**A JOINT LETTER FROM
ASSEMBLYWOMAN HELENE E. WEINSTEIN, 41st A.D. &
ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAIME R. WILLIAMS, 59th A.D.**

February 13, 2023

Ken Jenkins, Chairman
Charles Nesbitt, Vice Chair
NYS Independent Redistricting Commission
250 Broadway, 22nd floor
NY, NY 10007

Dear Chair Jenkins and Vice Chair Nesbitt,

As elected officials representing the neighboring 41st and 59th Assembly Districts, we write to respectfully oppose modifications to our adjacent district lines proposed by the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC).

For decades, the 41st and 59th Assembly Districts have represented a collection of diverse communities, an opportunity for us as representatives to advocate on any number of complex issues associated with the unique racial, ethnic, religious or socio-economic make-up of our constituencies.

Upon review of the IRC's proposal, we find that the planned adjustments - seemingly in the pursuit of district population parity - disrupt these communities by ignoring the following naturally drawn district lines:

- 1) **Quentin Road** – this commercial corridor serves as a dividing line between homes directly abutting Marine Park and those north of Quentin Road, below Kings Highway and Flatlands Avenue. The residents of latter portion are large young Jewish families who have moved in en masse over the past 2 decades. To further illustrate the extent of this growth: in 2003 this community was home to two or three synagogues, and at the time of this correspondence there are over twenty (20), most in the area delineated above.

The southerly, park adjacent, properties are home to multi-generational Irish-Catholic residents; members of the active Marine Park Civic Association, the Park's Active Seniors Program at the Carmine Carro Community Center and the Salt Marsh Nature Center. The sector is also the service region of the century-old – community funded – Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Fire Department, a vital organization that was instrumental in the rescue and recovery effort during Hurricane Sandy.

- 2) **Gerritsen Avenue and Knapp Street** – these two avenues have drawn a line, sensitive to the distinctions between the homogenous southern Marine Park community and the diverse Asian-American, Russian-American, Muslim and Jewish populations who have established newer communities in the areas of Kings, Bedford and Sheepshead Bays.

- 3) **Fraser Square** – this neighborhood, encompassing the blocks north and south of Fraser Square Park on Kings Highway at East 34th Street, has long been represented by the 41st Assembly District and the eponymous civic association, which has evolved over decades to become a unified voice for improving the quality of life for homeowners in the immediate area. The new lines break up the organization’s constituency, placing them into three (3) separate Assembly Districts.
- 4) **Kings Highway** – the 41st Assembly District’s distinct curvature follows a nearly three mile stretch of Kings Highway; constituting roughly half of the Avenue’s six-mile span through the borough of Brooklyn. The southern portion of the road is populated by high rise apartments; uniting these buildings and their shared tenant-centric interests with the multi-level housing found along Nostrand.

The northern half of Kings Highway is home to a thriving Black/Caribbean community living in modest single-family homes, represented by the active Flatbush Flatlands Civic Group and Nieuw Amersfort Community Association.

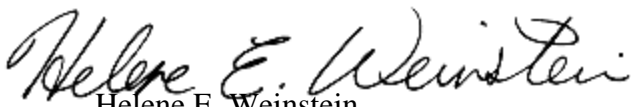
Kings Highway has seen a fair share of controversy, with the introduction of a dedicated City Bus lane, and the occasional subsequent neglect by agencies in question when maintaining the median system. It is in the best legislative interest of the adjacent residents and business to maintain singular representation to oversee the upkeep and further modernization of this heavily trafficked and sometimes dangerous major thoroughfare.

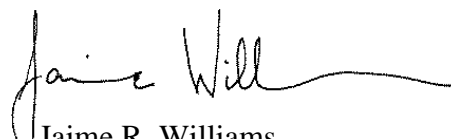
Other examples are less defined, such as the proposed elimination of the 41st District’s Sheepshead Bay commercial waterfront corridor and subsequent addition of 59th District’s Marine Park, Gerritsen Beach, Bergen Beach, Mill Basin and Canarsie communities. The IRC fails to recognize that these wetland bounded communities share unique ecological, legislative and economic interests, not necessarily applicable to the Sheepshead Bay commercial pier system.

There is a saying: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” and while we recognize that there is cause state-wide to address areas where district lines demand reformation, these two districts have successfully led and advocated for their diverse and segmented constituencies, and hastily redrawing decades-long district lines would no doubt lead to the outright disenfranchisement of communities both new and old.

We thank the commission for its consideration and hope that we can preserve the unique qualities and diverse neighborhoods in our respective Assembly districts.

Sincerely


Helene E. Weinstein
Assemblywoman, 41st A.D.


Jaime R. Williams
Assemblywoman, 59th A.D.