Testimony of University Settlement
before Independent Redistricting Commission

February 7, 2023

University Settlement is submitting testimony to support the Independent Redistricting Commission draft map for Assembly District 65, which reflects the shared interests of the Lower East Side, Chinatown, and Lower Manhattan by keeping the neighborhoods together.

As the nation’s first settlement house, University Settlement was founded on the Lower East Side over 135 years ago. Now, our programs stretch across lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, but we continue to serve as an anchor organization in the lower Manhattan area. We offer extensive programming including early childhood education, after school and older adults programming, mental health programming for children and families, and eviction prevention programs.

Across these variety of programs, we connect over 9,000 New Yorkers living in lower Manhattan to essential services. As our organization serves community members in the Lower East Side, in Chinatown, and across lower Manhattan, we have firsthand knowledge of the similar concerns and day-to-day experiences these neighborhoods share—from the schools and programs their children attend to the places where neighbors shop and frequent.

In our lower Manhattan communities, the vast majority of participants in many programs identify as Asian or Asian American, and many speak an Asian language at home such as Cantonese or Mandarin, lending us insight into the needs of this community. Our Houston Street Center, located in Chinatown, has always served as a community hub and safe space for our AAPI neighbors, offering a range of safety resources for family members of all ages. Our data and observation indicate a high need for youth programming focused on community education and linguistically competent support services and resources.

Keeping Manhattan Chinatown with the Lower East Side allows our Asian and Asian American neighbors to join and advocate for their shared community interests. It ensures vital resources for culturally responsive programming specific to Asian and Asian American needs. Because of this, we support the draft map.

Thank you for your time.