I write as a resident of the Town of Niskayuna and a pulpit rabbi in the City of Schenectady  . For 28 years so far I have served to foster community as well as advocate a religious community in the greater Schenectady community.

I must admit that I am baffled to why divide the Town of Niskayuna and lump part of us with Saratoga County. I confess that I think about this daily as I drive 3 miles to the synagogue, passing thru 3 assembly districts. As I pull out of my driveway, the neighbors on the other side of the street would be in a different assembly district and the synagogue is in a third. This plan will minimalize our voices and do much harm to building up our community.

Let me speak as a pulpit rabbi. The towns of Niskayuna, Colonie, Guilderland, and the city of Schenectady all share houses of worship that reflect their diverse populations.

The current Assembly representative is a member of Congregation Gates of Heaven, which lists a mailing address of Niskayuna, but is officially located in Schenectady along the border with Niskayuna. The Niskayuna Central School District has a Schenectady mailing address.  This is a common theme in Niskayuna, Colonie, Guilderland, and Schenectady, as we are so closely linked, many mailing and official locations are mixed, such as Colonie having Guilderland, Niskayuna and Schenectady addresses and vice-versa.  This is not so for Halfmoon and Waterford.

he towns of Guilderland, Niskayuna and Colonie have been a hub of immigration for well-over a decade. They are also home to many of the Jewish population of the Capital Region.

Halfmoon and Waterford do not have a single house of worship that is non-Christian in denomination. The Islamic Center of the Capital District in Colonie (but with a Schenectady address) serves Albany and Schenectady Counties, as do the Congregation Gates of Heaven Synagogue and Agudat Achim in Niskayuna (though they have a Schenectady address). The Sikh temple in Niskayuna serves both Niskayuna and Colonie. There are two Hindu temples in Colonie that serve Niskayuna and Guilderland. There is a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, Chua Di Da, in the Village of Menands in Colonie. In Albany and Schenectady counties (Colonie, Niskayuna and Schenectady), they all have shared membership.

We celebrate the diversity in religion and race in our communities. The interfaith community is alive and well in these communities. The social justice aspect of this redistricting cannot be ignored.

Both personally and professionally, I cannot grasp the functionality of this plan. To divide a town seems to have no purpose. To divide neighbors from each other who share much in common is less than desirable. To divide a faith community who strive to share community together is hurtful.