

CARNEGIE HALL

New York State Independent Redistricting Commission Meeting
November 10, 2021

My name is David Freudenthal, and I am the Government Relations Director at Carnegie Hall, one of the many premier arts institutions located in New York's 12th Congressional District.

For the reasons outlined below, Carnegie Hall urges the Independent Redistricting Commission to keep a consecutive East Side district with its extraordinary concentration of cultural organizations. It is essential that we have a representative who is deeply knowledgeable about challenging policy issues necessary for the arts and cultural sector.

Carnegie Hall is representative of the many iconic cultural gems large and small in the 12th District. The Hall brings the transformative power of music to the widest possible audience. In addition to presenting more than 700 unique performances in three concert halls and welcoming close to 700,000 visitors annually—approximately 20,000 of whom are children in our school programs—we also provide educational and artistic experiences to young people, families, and students across New York City and around the globe in partnership with public human services agencies through community and school-based programs.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, arts institutions were gravely impacted and had to shut their doors for a year and a half. Throughout that trying time, it was critical to be represented by a Member of Congress who not only supported the arts but was our advocate in Washington.

Last March, Carnegie Hall migrated our artistic and educational programming to a digital format. We sought to inspire our community with online musical performances, storytelling, and conversations with world-class artists at no charge to the public. We also assembled free educational activities and resources for students, educators, and families on our websites—intentionally designed for adaptable and accessible instruction whether in-school or at the kitchen table. Despite the closure of our physical spaces, we renewed our commitment to service to New Yorkers—and in many ways expanded it—to meet the needs of the moment, while still providing a full suite of educational and cultural offerings.

Carnegie Hall, together with our fellow cultural organizations in service of the public, shares a commitment to provide affordable access to cultural and educational programming to New Yorkers. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have provided essential resources to advance and support public health, public life, and public benefit. We have leveraged our collective resources, infrastructure, and relationships to private and public partners to scaffold equitable and accessible opportunities not only for our constituents, but for the national cultural sector. As our country begins to welcome back the international community, New York City's arts and cultural offerings will be a magnetic force to draw tourists back, reestablish our place as a global cultural destination, and galvanize our national job growth and economic recovery.

As the arts and cultural sector strives to bring our workers and audiences back as safely as possible, it is of critical importance to our industry not only to survive but to thrive that we have Congressional Representation who understands the many issues facing our community today—someone who will continue to work to get federal funding and work with the City and State elected officials to ensure we may continue to thrive, serving New Yorkers and contributing to the economy and vitality of our beloved city.

Thank you for your time.