



Testimony: Urban Upbound

Committee: Independent Redistricting Commission

Topic: Maintaining a consecutive Long Island City waterfront and East Side of Manhattan district

Date: 11/17/2021

My name is Bishop Mitchell Taylor, Senior Pastor of Center of Hope International & Co-founder and President, Urban Upbound and lifelong Long Island City resident. I am calling on the Independent Redistricting Commission to maintain a consecutive Long Island City waterfront and East Side of Manhattan district.

Urban Upbound is a community organization working to make public housing neighborhoods places of true opportunity, growth, and economic mobility. We need representation who is enterprising and understands how to bring opportunity and growth to NYCHA developments with programming and services that directly benefit the residents. We need representation who can cut through the bureaucracy of government agencies and knows how to advocate for funding for NYCHA housing.

At this pivotal moment in our City, our community cannot afford to be represented by someone without a track record of positive accomplishments for NYCHA.

Urban Upbound's model works with local leaders and the existing channels in public housing neighborhoods - churches, schools, tenant associations, and businesses - to create and implement programs that meet the needs of each family and each public housing neighborhood - from mentoring and college preparation for young students to job training, leadership programs, and financial literacy for adults and seniors.

Long Island City and the East Side of Manhattan are both connected by their shared identities as business development hubs, spiritual life, and schools. We need representation who understands the nuances of each of these factors and how they can interact with each other for the shared benefit of our communities.

Many NYCHA development residents work on the East Side of Manhattan, which connects to Western Queens with F Train subway service. Residents rely on this transportation daily, and we need to maintain it and ensure we have representation who understands the importance of infrastructure to make sure it is fully funded and working.

The waterfront neighborhood in Long Island City that I live in is known as 'Asthma Alley' due to the polluting power plants that have caused generations of Western Queens residents to become sick with asthma. The biggest of these structures is called 'Big Allis' and it is located directly across the street from Queensbridge. We need representation who understands how complex and important this issue is and who can lead the critical effort to shut down the plants that have made our residents sick.

The years ahead are going to be pivotal for our city, state, and nation, and it is essential that we have strong and experienced leadership in the Congress.