**Testimony of Daniel R. Garodnick**

**New York State Independent Redistricting Commission**

**November 10, 2021**

As a former member of the New York City Council, representing the East Side of Manhattan, and as the president of a not-for-profit organization – Riverside Park Conservancy – serving the West Side of Manhattan, I have an interest in ensuring that the New York City Congressional districts are properly configured – particularly in Manhattan. I offer this testimony in my personal capacity.

First of all, I support the Letter Maps over the Named Maps. The Named Maps appear to break apart historic communities and political entities, and would, as a result, do harm to communities of interest.

Second, it is obvious to me that these districts should be recognized as a clearly identifiable, historical, social and political entity. The east and west side each have north/south subways, which create shared impacts; elementary and middle school zones that neither cross Central Park, nor run river-to-river; and the west side has contiguous waterfront parks from Hudson River Park up through Riverside Park.

Having communal areas – like parks, schools and subways – that are not be chopped into multiple political jurisdictions allows constituents to better educate elected officials, to give elected officials the opportunity to develop an expertise on the matters of particular concern, and for constituents to have a single point of contact for advocacy that does not allow multiple elected officials crossing those boundaries to dodge responsibility.

 It appears to me that both Maps J and H recognize this fact.

One final point is that Morningside Heights should be in Map J and not Map Q. In culture and character, Morningside Heights, particularly around Columbia, has more in common with the Upper West Side than Harlem. Riverside Park Conservancy, for example, represents the entire area from 59th to 181st Street, which includes both the Upper West Side and Morningside Heights. We find a high degree of commonality across this area, and it allows us to better accomplish our park improvement goals. Of course, separating Morningside Heights from the Upper West Side would divide Columbia University in half. As a premier educational institution – Columbia University is itself a community of interest that should be in one Congressional District.