



YEMENI AMERICAN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION  
جمعية التجار اليمنيين الأمريكيين  
تُعلم - ندافم - نرتقم Educate - Advocate - Elevate

## Testimony for the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission

Nov 16, 2021

Thank you to the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) for organizing this second series of public hearings.

I am Badr Fuad, Director of Merchants Services at the Yemeni American Merchants Association. YAMA is a grassroots nonprofit social service organization founded in 2017. Our mission is to educate and elevate Yemeni American merchants and their families through education, civil rights advocacy, business, and social service support. Based in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, we seek to advance policies that support New York City's estimated 6,000 Yemeni American bodega owners and their families.

YAMA is a part of the NYIC's Mapping Our Future campaign, a statewide coalition of advocates dedicated to mobilizing the grassroots to get involved in redistricting and advocate for a fair process and fair maps.

Fair districts are the foundation for fair representation.

Unfortunately, this commission failed to come to an agreement in September and instead of one compromise draft map, released two partisan maps. This abdication of responsibility has already been discussed and debated and I won't add any more to that, other than to say it has made our job as advocates who care about fair districts substantially more difficult.

Instead of having one map to discuss in detail, we are left with two maps, neither of which are non-partisan and fully inclusive of public input – in particular the input, given during the first round of hearings, of multiple grassroots organizations representing the Arab community of Bay Ridge.

YAMA urges the Commission to create an Assembly district that keeps Arab communities in South Brooklyn together. We ask you to create a district consisting of the entirety of Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights; this proposed district is compact and meets the total population requirement of approximately 134,500 residents. We are submitting a map of the proposed district to the Commission, along with our request.

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We thank the commission for committing to an open process and for maintaining a website with archived meetings, events, and documents. Moving forward, it is now more important than ever to create a partnership between this commission and advocacy organizations. YAMA particularly urges the commission to take a proactive role in engaging with ethnic media around the state. We stand willing to support you in that effort.

We ask that the commission spends the next weeks and months delivering on the promise that New Yorkers voted for in 2014. We ask this commission to fulfill its mission to create fair maps without the partisan and racially-tinged bias of decades prior.

Thank you again and thanks also to the many partners who are in this fight for fair maps and fair representation.