

My name is Shaun Abreu. I am a tenant rights attorney, resident of Congressional District 13, and the council member-elect for District 7 in northern Manhattan. I'm here to urge you to keep expanding Congressional District 13 to include the west Bronx, which is geographically adjacent and forms a community of interest with northern Manhattan. The Names plan, unlike the Letters plan, completely disregards decades of civic engagement aimed at achieving better political representation.

When I was a child, my family was evicted from our home in Washington Heights. As we struggled to get back on our feet, we relocated to the west Bronx, where we found a community that felt much like the one we had been forced to leave. My family, like so many of the families that I have represented in housing court, took comfort in relocating to a place that was home to other Spanish-speaking immigrants and people with shared values and concerns.

The residents of northern Manhattan and the west Bronx deserve to elect someone who can focus on those concerns that disproportionately affect them. Both parts of the city are plagued with rising crime and homelessness, as well as schools that are under-resourced for the populations they serve. Challenges of this magnitude require undivided attention, which should not be diluted by the competing priorities of fundamentally dissimilar neighborhoods.

Northern Manhattan and the west Bronx are already united by the people that live there, businesses that operate there, and the city itself. They are connected by the Fordham Road Bridge, the Cross Bronx Expressway, bus lines, and the 1 train. They are both served by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and the shops that run out of the River Plaza.

Elected officials and community leaders have motivated voters in northern Manhattan by giving voice to their unique concerns and promising them a chance to be represented by someone who shares their background and values.

However, redrawing the lines by dividing northern Manhattan and combining it with Riverdale and the current District 15 as we see in the Names plan, would demotivate and dilute the votes of immigrants and people of color. It is undeniable that northern Manhattan and the west Bronx form a community of interest; courts recognized this reality in 2012 when they acknowledged the population flow and dynamic political activity between Upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

I ask the Letters plan to adjust along University, Fordham, and the Grand Concourse to make population adjustments rather than venture south beyond the Cross Bronx Expressway.