



SAFEST

South Asian Fund for Education, Scholarship & Training

TESTIMONY OF:

Mazeda Uddin – Founder and CEO

South Asian Fund for Education, Scholarship and Education (SAFEST)

NYS Redistricting Commission Hearing on November 17th, 2021

My name is Mazeda Uddin. I am a resident of Jamaica Hills and CEO of South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship, and Training (SAFEST) which is a member of the South Queens Redistricting Coalition. SAFEST is an organization serving the needs of immigrant New Yorkers. Since 2015, we have delivered a comprehensive array of services to thousands of children, youth, adults and entire families from South Asian countries in Queens.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak about our vibrant South Asian neighborhoods in Jamaica Hills and Briarwood. As the backbone of our thriving Bangladeshi community, Hillside Avenue has countless ethnic grocery stores, houses of worship, and restaurants. Not only do they provide daily household needs of our newly immigrated families but also satisfy the longing of a taste from home for many in our community. Unlike other neighborhoods, our growing Bangladeshi neighbors live where they shop. Any division of Jamaica Hills and Briarwood would dilute the strength of the community there.

SAFEST is in support of the proposed UNITY map as proposed by, Asian American Legal Defense, Latino Justice and Medgar Evers College Center for Law and Social Justice. This map is a joint effort of the communities of color and we think it has real promise. This map keeps our neighborhoods together in one district. We are advocating for one Assembly, one State Senate and one Congressional District to substantially represent our neighborhoods. The community is really organized around these efforts. We think that the Unity map will get us to a place where we have a real voice in government.

As a SAFEST representative, my team and I have the first-hand understanding of challenges that our communities face on a daily basis. Since the start of COVID19, many of our South Asian students have suffered inequity in education ranging from lack of assistance to device requests to lack of mental health support from schools because their parents speak little or no English. Any division of our community will negatively impact the resources our community desperately needs.

Thank you,

Mazeda A. Uddin, founder and CEO of SAFEST