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RE: IRC HEARING – NOV 8, 2021 – PACE UNIVERSITY, WHITE PLAINS

Gentlemen and Ladies of the Commission,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to address you here in Westchester.

I am Louise Perez, resident of Larchmont, Senate District 37, Assembly District 91, and Congressional District 16. I am giving this testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Larchmont-Mamaroneck where I have lived in the Town of Mamaroneck and the Village of Larchmont for 36 years combined. I have been involved in my children’s schools, various municipal committees (traffic, parks & trees, environmental), and have been for most of those years a member of the League of Women Voters including serving for five years as chapter president.

In my testimony today on the drawing of our electoral district lines I want to make 3 points:

1. Larchmont and Mamaroneck should be considered as one community;
2. The Village of Mamaroneck should not be divided between two districts even though the Village straddles the Town of Mamaroneck and a small portion of the Town of Rye;
3. Larchmont-Mamaroneck should be included in districts with other Westchester Long Island Sound Shore communities, including other communities in the Long Island Sound watershed, but also be as compact as possible.

First a little history. The Town of Mamaroneck was founded in 1661 and included present day Larchmont and Mamaroneck along Long Island Sound and extended north to what is now Scarsdale. 130 years ago, residents along the Sound Shore were unhappy with the Town’s services for fire and police and carved out the Village of Larchmont. The Village of Mamaroneck was similarly carved out of the Town of Mamaroneck, but also included in its incorporation part of the Town of Rye – that section is known as Rye Neck.

Over the years the three municipalities, the Village of Larchmont, the Village of Mamaroneck and the Town of Mamaroneck have shared a school system, local access TV, youth sports programs and senior services, and cooperated on many other things. People in the 3 municipalities, no matter where they live, consider themselves part of the larger Larchmont-Mamaroneck Community. We participate in each other’s events, go to each other’s houses of worship, patronize each other’s business districts, cooperate on issues like the environment, work together on our local Hunger Task Force and Human Rights Commission, and many more. Our local government leaders, school leaders, houses of worship and our myriad of community organizations meet for a monthly breakfast (The Summit) to discuss matters of mutual interest and importance to the whole community.

People move to Larchmont-Mamaroneck primarily (i) for the schools, both public and private, (ii) the proximity to and easy access to New York City via Metro North’s New Haven line and I-95, (iii) the beauty of the Long Island Sound shore, (iv) the community spirit of volunteerism, as evidenced by widespread participation in community life, (v) and by the diverse nature of our residents. Many residents continue to live in the community long after their kids are grown and despite high taxes.

Because we are on Long Island Sound – a ground zero area for sea level rise due to climate change - environmental issues, the health of the Sound, its watershed and flooding have always been particularly important. We also share conservation areas and trails that cross municipal borders. We are tied to and cooperate with our neighboring communities on these issues and therefore think that the Sound Shore communities from Pelham to Port Chester constitute a community of interest and should share the same districts. We also share common issues for the I-95 corridor, the Metro North train line, and the Boston Post Road.

We think the districts should be compact but, to the extent possible, include the watershed of Long Island Sound which extends over to the Bronx River and up to the Kensico Reservoir. The focus should be on the Long Island Sound watershed and the infrastructure affecting it.

Concerning the Congressional lines, we feel that the southern district line should divide Westchester from the Bronx. The two counties are totally different in their governmental and school structures, as well as the services they provide to residents. If for population equalization purposes a part of the Bronx County needs to be attached to Westchester, then City Island on Long Island Sound would be a more logical choice from our point of view.

We thank the IRC for its monumental and historic work in creating our electoral districts that will affect our lives for the next decade. We appreciate the work it takes in considering the many concerns of various communities but hope that the end result will create fairer maps and representation for New Yorkers.

The League of Women Voters of Larchmont/Mamaroneck (LWV-LM) is a non-partisan organization which encourages political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.