Hi, my name is John Heyer II.

I have lived in the South Brooklyn/Carroll Gardens neighborhood of Brooklyn for all 40 years of my life. My wife and I are currently raising our three children here and also run our business, Scotto Funeral Home, here.

I’d like you to keep my neighborhood together and want you to know that the proposed NYS Assembly district lines will not only fragment this cohesive community but also prevent me and my neighbors from being able to advocate for the needs of our neighborhood. Our neighborhood, which was historically called South Brooklyn since we were south of the official City of Brooklyn which ended at Atlantic Avenue, has very pronounced borders created by the waterfront, Gowanus Expressway and the Gowanus Canal. These boundaries in particular have formed the community in a very cohesive way for generations, uniting us in our common experiences and common desire to better this part of Brooklyn for the betterment of all. Ignoring these natural boundaries when drawing district lines is to ignore the impact that they have on the people and dilutes our community’s voice when advocating for their betterment. In the coming future it will be important that our community and its elect officials be able to speak with as much consensus as possible to the concerns the Gowanus Canal Development on the west bank of the Canal, the reconstruction of the Gowanus Expressway and BQE trench and development of the Brooklyn Container Terminal.

As a life-long member of the community whose family has lived here for 5 generations, I can also tell you that names like Gowanus, Columbia Street District and Carroll Gardens are all modern names used by real estate companies to market property. For those of us who live and work in this community, the area from the west bank of the Gowanus Canal, Hamilton Avenue, the Brooklyn Container Terminal and Douglass Street from Court Street to the Canal and DeGraw Street from Court Street to the water front are now and have always been one neighborhood. Weather inhabited by early Irish, then Italian immigrants or Puerto Rican families seeking an opportunity in New York or the young professionals who now come from across the country, throughout Europe, such as France, or Latin America, this community has been able to retain its small town charm due to the uniqueness of its low-rise housing, central commercial strips and active community, political, ethnic and religious organizations.

As an example, the purposed lines for our neighborhood would split one of our oldest religious communities, the Roman Catholic Community founded in the 1851 currently lead by Rev. Msgr. Guy Massie, in two by diving its parish boundaries in half between two different elected officials for the first time. This will also divide our main commercial avenue, Court Street, which is where many of our parades, religious processions and street fairs occur.

We are also proud to be home of one of the oldest public parks in what was the City of Brooklyn, Carroll Park. This is un-official town square of our entire neighborhood and not just half as these lines would suggest. Furthermore, the proposed lines also exclude all public schools from one half of the purposed divided Carroll Gardens which will hurt those who will be in the boundaries of a school which their elected official does not represent.

As someone who is the fifth generation continuously living in this community, who has his business here and is part of countless community organizations and groups, I strongly urge you to listen to the community and history and ensure that our neighborhood will not be fragmented. The best way to do this is to keep together the area bound by Hamilton Avenue, the Gowanus Canal, the waterfront and at least Douglass Street if not Atlantic Avenue.

John Heyer II

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