

Independent Redistricting Commission  
250 Broadway, 22nd Floor  
New York, NY 10007

### **Windsor Terrace/Kensington**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rebecca Lehde Coates. I reside in Windsor Terrace and am speaking on behalf of myself and my community. My comments will focus on your plan for the 44th Assembly District and specifically your decision to place portions of the neighborhoods of Windsor Terrace and Kensington in two different Assembly Districts, the 44th and the 51st. We believe both neighborhoods should be wholly within the 44th AD as they have been historically. Your decision to put portions of both Windsor Terrace and Kensington into different Assembly Districts makes both impacted ADs less compact and contiguous and also divides two long established and discrete communities with common interests, demographics and a history of positive civic activism. Simply stated it is contrary to many of the bedrock principles which should guide fair redistricting and good government.

Specifically, we ask that you make Greenwood Cemetery along 20th Street the western border of the 44th AD not the Prospect Expressway as in the draft plan, and Greenwood Cemetery along McDonald Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway out to 39th Street the Northern boundary between the 44th and 51st ADs. This is a shift of only a few blocks but makes complete sense geographically. Without this change the portions of Kensington and Windsor Terrace cut out of the 44th AD will be a small after thought in the 51st AD divided from that district by the hundreds of acres of Greenwood Cemetery. The 51st AD contains the entirety of the thriving neighborhood of Sunset Park and that neighborhood historically dominates that district. The inevitable result of the draft plan is that the few blocks of Windsor Terrace and Kensington attached to the vast bulk of Sunset Park will be underserved. The proposed plan also dilutes the ability of vital neighborhood institutions to advocate on behalf of their respective constituents. Multiple local Elementary Schools including PS 154, PS 130, PS 179 and PS 230, several local places of worship such as Immaculate Heart of Mary RC Church, The Flatbush Jewish Center, which despite its name is in Kensington, and the Darul Jannah Masjid and Masjid Nur Al-Islam will all see their catchment areas, now wholly within the 44th AD, divided between the 44th and the 51st AD. This is especially troublesome with respect to the Mosque's which serve the growing South Asian community in Kensington and will now have to petition two different Assembly Members rather than having a single point of contact.

Historically, the entirety of the two discrete, cohesive and well-defined neighborhoods of Kensington and Windsor Terrace have been in the same Assembly district. This is true since at least the reapportionment following the 1970 census. Indeed, the phone number for the local Assembly District Office has remained unchanged since 1974 and many of my friends and neighbors have told me that they have it memorized or on their speed dial. This is not just an interesting but irrelevant tidbit, it is testimony to the fact that at least in Brooklyn the Assembly District is the smallest unit of government and traditionally the most responsive to local needs.

In the 1950's Robert Moses built the Prospect Expressway and inflicted a still obvious scar on Windsor Terrace and Kensington. The people of Windsor Terrace and Kensington banded together and protested Moses' plan but unlike more affluent neighborhoods such as Brooklyn Heights and Greenwich Village they lost and the Prospect Expressway was built. Moses' wound however drew the Windsor Terrace and Kensington communities closer together and over the following decades they jointly fought and defeated repeated ill advised rezoning proposals to first permit large scale manufacturing and then residential over development in these thriving working class neighborhoods. We ask that you not reopen the wound Robert Moses inflicted. Please make Greenwood Cemetery, not the Prospect Expressway the boundary between the 44th AD and the 51st AD. Please keep Windsor Terrace and Kensington intact. I take note that the IRC plan for the Assembly districts in Brooklyn has uniform district populations of 134-135,000 persons. By contrast, the current Brooklyn districts have populations ranging between 128,000 and 141,000. It is appropriate for the districts to be more balanced in population. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*R. Lehde Coates*

Rebecca Lehde Coates