

## TESTIMONY TO THE INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FROM BETH SMAYDA

Hello, my name is Beth Smayda and I am a resident of White Plains, NY. I am a former White Plains Common Council Member and have served in the past as President of the White Plains League of Women Voters and Head of Legislation for the White Plains PTA Council. I currently serve on the Westchester County Board of Legislators' County Budget Advisory Committee and as a White Plains Democratic District Leader.

I am very familiar with the City of White Plains given my civic involvements and even served as district leader for a good portion of the area which is proposed to be removed from AD-88 in the current draft map from the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC). More specifically, I am referring to the area northwest of Bryant Avenue and Winslow Road, Vermont Avenue, Sterling Avenue and Charlotte Street, which would be shifted to AD-93. In exchange, AD-88 would pick up a portion of Yonkers. This proposal is problematic for a number of reasons.

1. The IRC draft map divides two active and defined White Plains neighborhoods, namely, the Highlands and Prospect Park (areas north and west of Winslow Road, Vermont Avenue, and Prospect Street; north of Sterling Avenue, Charlotte Street and Bryant Avenues; and south of West and East Post Roads.) White Plains is a city with very active and involved neighborhood associations which further solidifies these two neighborhoods' identities as communities of interest. The IRC should avoid dividing neighborhoods when drawing district boundaries within the City of White Plains.
2. The remainder of the White Plains area that is proposed to be moved to AD-93 from AD-88 that is north and west of West and East Post Roads would be alienated from White Plains' single family residential neighborhoods. West and East Post Roads are major commercial streets. Putting this area in the primarily northern Westchester Assembly District 93 will increase their alienation from the single-family residential neighborhoods of White Plains, again, dividing a community of interest. Its current northern border is along the Bronx River Parkway and White Plains' downtown area, both of which provide a natural northern border in the current 2023 to 2024 AD-88, maintaining the (cohesiveness) of this single-family enclave with the rest of the District. The IRC should not remove this single-family neighborhood out of AD-88.
3. Introducing a Large City into AD-88 which has historically just included Towns and Small Cities will just, as a matter of practicality, dilute the attention and thus representation that can be placed on Small City concerns. As you're aware, Small Cities operate under State laws separate and apart from Large Cities and that difference should be considered when determining State representation, i.e. redistricting. The IRC should reverse the addition of Yonkers, a Large City, to AD-88.

4. The City of White Plains has similarities to the City of New Rochelle. Both are suburban cities in southern Westchester with unified city school districts. These two communities are racially and socioeconomically diverse, and they have a broad array of housing and transportation infrastructure. Parts of White Plains and New Rochelle have been together in AD-88 for several decades. Since New York State laws that govern cities are different than those for towns or villages, it is beneficial to have significant parts of these two cities kept in AD-88. By having parts of both communities in the same district, the representative from this district is more likely to understand and be able to address the needs of these two cities. Currently, White Plains and New Rochelle make up about half of the population of AD-88, ensuring that they have a voice to advocate for their unique needs as suburban cities. The IRC draft reduces this by moving a significant part of White Plains from AD-88 to AD-93, which is a district that primarily includes smaller towns in northern Westchester. The IRC should reverse this change and keep as much of White Plains and New Rochelle together as possible in AD-88.
5. In addition, the new proposed IRC lines remove Winbrook Public Housing Complex from AD-88 and places it in the more rural, less dense AD-93. The Winbrook population is an integral community to White Plains and should have its interests represented in an Assembly District whose Assembly member is well versed in Small City issues. This community should not be moved out of AD-88 by the IRC.

Thank you for your consideration of my views as you work to ensure fair and equitable representation of our State's residents.