

**Queens County Public Meeting – July 22, 2021 - Testimony by Ashook Ramsaran  
New York State Independent Redistricting Commission**

Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing. A copy of my testimony has been uploaded for the record

My name is Ashook Ramsaran, born in Guyana and a long-time resident of Queens for 53 years. I am a vice president of Queens Civic Congress (QCC) representing more than 80 civic and other community organizations throughout the Borough of Queens, providing a forum for the civic associations and neighborhood organizations to develop and present common policies and positions. Co-Chair of Queens Complete Count Committee of Census 2020; I am also a member of the Fresh Meadows Home Owners' Civic Association (FMHCA); Chair of NY Presbyterian Hospital Queens Community Advisory Council; Secretary of Caribbean American Coalition (CAC) and the boards of several local, regional and global civic organizations and academic institutions and member of several others. I am also president of the Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) with worldwide chapters and membership, advocating fairness and equitable rights of people of Indian origin globally I have previously advocated, supported and testified at several hearings including Redistricting Hearings in 2017, R2A re-zoning of Fresh Meadows, landmarking of the Brinkerhoff Cemetery in Queens and other hearings.

Rachael Fauss, Policy and Research Manager, Citizens Union said, “*We recognize that there are a number of factors that contribute to the election of candidates to office, but the lack of fair and objective criteria in the drawing of district lines has too often allowed for the protection of incumbent legislators at the expense of communities of interest*”. According to Citizens Union, Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) has a history of gerrymandering to ensure incumbents win re-election and the parties in power maintain their control of their respective houses in the legislature. In doing so, the current redistricting process fails to adequately account for growing minority groups and provide for representation that reflects the diversity of the state.

I fully support the community initiative to assign a cohesive state assembly (and state senate) district to include the South Asian population of Richmond Hill, Ozone Park, South Ozone Park and Woodhaven. I am advocating and adding to those who have spoken before and will speak afterwards on the critical need to retain a single, contiguous, compact, cohesive community for fair, equitable and effective representation of people with similar backgrounds and interests, families and friends with shared culture, history, aspirations and community spirit as well as shared interests, shared concerns, shared values, - in a singular district in order to keep the community area intact: socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Census 2020 statistics show that, for the many reasons which are well known, Queens' count was less than NYS 64% and far less than national response of 67%. Ultimately, these statistics are to be used to determine redistricting. Doing so without consideration of the uncounted would be denying segments and areas deservedly real representation. Real demographics and population statistics clearly confirm the need for retaining the community intact and provide the supporting means for its own representation – at all city and state levels. The maps and respective statistics make it obvious.

The US Constitution with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 guarantees fair and equitable representation. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles 21, 27 and 29 affirm the inalienable rights of people “to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” – underline freely chosen representatives. What better way to be in compliance than to provide the means for chosen representation by keeping the community intact. People choose their representatives; representatives must choose the people. This is wrong and needs to be remedied.

The California Citizens Redistricting Commission states that it “is critical to ensuring district lines are drawn to keep your community whole and grouped with nearby communities with similar interests. That ensures that your voice is heard by your elected leaders in such decisions as the quality of your child’s schools or how high your taxes are.”

The New York Times: “....draw straightforward and fair maps of Congressional and state legislative districts by keeping communities intact and respecting local jurisdictional lines.”

It is critical to keep a unified, compact district with natural and sensible boundaries. It makes no sense to partition and divide this community, ripping apart neighborhoods and destroying the strong partnerships shared by those who live in these communities.

**PLEASE DO NOT DIVIDE, DILUTE & DISRUPT - IT IS NOT IN THE PEOPLE’S INTEREST.  
WE ASK YOU TO DO THE RIGHT THING – IT IS YOUR DUTY. NYS MUST NOT BECOME LIKE TEXAS !!**

You have a tough job to do and we can help you as we are doing today.  
Please give positive consideration to our proposals.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted by: Ashook Ramsaran Date: July 22, 2021

