

Advocating for Caribbean LGBTQ Voices in NYC

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New York City Council Redistricting Commission Hearing Thursday, May 26, 2022

Written Testimony

Mohamed Q. Amin, Founder and Executive Director, Caribbean Equality Project

Good Afternoon Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Mohamed Q. Amin. I have been a homeowner, voter, and community organizer living and working in Richmond Hill, "Little Guyana," for over 17 years.

I am also the founder and executive director of the [Caribbean Equality Project](#) (CEP). Founded in 2015 in response to anti-LGBTQ hate crime violence in Richmond Hill, CEP is a community-based organization that empowers, advocates for, and represents Black and Brown, LGBTQ+ Caribbean immigrants in New York City. Through public education, community organizing, civic engagement, storytelling, and cultural and social programming, the organization focuses on advocacy for LGBTQ+ and immigrant rights, gender equity, racial justice, immigration, mental health services, and ending hate violence in the Caribbean diaspora.

The Caribbean Equality Project is a proud member of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force, a collective that unites 21 AAPI organizations across all five boroughs of New York City to advocate for fair and equitable maps.

There are currently over 1.5 million residents of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent in New York City, comprising over 18% of the City's total population. AAPI New Yorkers are the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group and voting population in New York City.

Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are home to the largest South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in Queens, the fastest-growing immigrant population in NYC. The AALDEF's Asian American Community of interest map for South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill defines and highlights how unjustly divided these neighborhoods are into 3 City Council districts, 28, 29, and 32. These district lines have diluted our political power, vote, and voice for decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted immigrant communities, and it will take years to recover from its economic crisis. In 2020, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Asian and Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers had the highest rates of COVID-19 infection and hospitalization due to limited access to language accessibility and culturally-competent testing and vaccination sites, including in neighborhoods of South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill in Queens. From health disparities, immigration, food insecurity, housing, economic disadvantages, and political disenfranchisement, our elected officials have neglected South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill.

Asian immigrant New Yorkers and LGBTQ+ people have always been essential workers. Our diverse and intersectional communities can no longer be ignored, underfunded, and under-resourced.

Redistricting is a racial justice, immigrant rights, and quality of life issue. Today, I am calling on the NYC Redistricting Commission to hear our voices and bring Justice to Richmond Hill. We deserve equity in the New York City Council Redistricting process. We deserve to be kept whole and protected under the Voting Rights Act. We deserve fair and equitable maps. We deserve to be united and not divided!

Give us a fighting chance to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic a more politically resilient community.

I want to thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. Our recommendations will help the NYC Redistricting Commission create fair maps to unite Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park into one City Council District. We look forward to working with you to create a more equitable New York City.