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Good Afternoon Commissioners,

My name is Jagpreet Singh. I am the Political Director for DRUM, Desis Rising up and Moving. We are a membership based grassroots organization that organizes with the working class South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities across New York City around building power, immigration issues, and more. We are here as part of the APA Voice Redistricting Task Force to ensure our voices are not erased in this process. I want to thank you all for giving us the opportunity for public comment before the maps are drawn. I hope to see more public engagement after the maps are released, especially in the outer boroughs where most of New York City lives, and at times and dates that make it accessible to our working class communities.

I urge the commission to keep our communities of interest together. In speaking with our membership, we've identified a number of communities of interest which are core to the everyday lives of our members and the community at large.

In Queens the most prominent community of interest are South Asians, predominantly Punjabi, and Indo-Caribbean communities in Richmond Hill and South Ozone park. This community has decades old ties to this area, has built religious institutions, commercial hubs, and cultural centers, and is vital to the diverse fabric of our city. The other community of interest in Queens is the Bangladeshi and Indian communities that make up the Hillside corridor. I ask you to drive down this corridor from Jamaica to Glen Oaks and look for yourself what this community has done to build up this area. Finally we have a large base in West Queens, in the asian communities of interest of Woodside, Elmhurst, and western Jackson Heights. These communities have create an Asian hub in this part of queens synonymous with the cultural fabric and diversity of this city. The folks in these communities celebrate lunar new year together, eat and shop along similar commercial corridors, and worship together and deserve to be kept whole.

In the Bronx we urge the commission to ensure the Bangladeshi community in Parkchester is kept whole. They have been pivotal to the growth of population in Parkchester and have become a key part of the larger Parkchester community. They are currently in one district and we ask the commission to keep them there. In Brooklyn we urge the commission to ensure that the Bangladeshi community in and around McDonald and Church in Kensington are kept whole like they are currently. You can reference AALDEF's communities of interest maps for specifics of these communities.

The working class folks in these communities are the backbone of this city. They are the drivers, construction workers, mothers, custodians, vendors, and more who work all hours of the day to ensure that New York City is the city that never sleeps. They kept our city running before the pandemic, are risking their lives to run it during this pandemic, and will continue to ensure that our city thrives.

Commissioners, it's up to you to ensure that their ability to advocate for their issues and organize in their communities isn't being trampled. We've seen in past cycles and other redistrictings that there are times our communities are kept whole, but forced in districts with majority communities whose leverage makes it impossible for our communities to build power. Please ensure our communities of interest are kept whole and are able to build power.

Jagpreet Singh Political Director

Desis Rising up and Moving - DRUM