

Good evening. My name is Rita Joseph, and I have the privilege of serving as the Council Member for the 40th Council District in Brooklyn. I thank the NYC Districting Commission for offering the public the opportunity to offer their thoughts on this critically important redistricting process.

Today, I'd like to speak in support of the current structure of Council District 40, with one significant change. To some, Council District lines are largely artificial, but in their ideal iterations, they are a composition of complete neighborhoods with shared cultures and values. In this regard, the current iteration of Council District 40 is a collection of neighborhoods that are fortunate for not being split up, a reality that other neighborhoods in different districts do not have the luxury of experiencing. Right now, I have the privilege of representing the entirety of Flatbush, while my colleague and friend, Council Member Farah Louis, represents East Flatbush. Additionally, I represent the entirety of Prospect Park South, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, and Ditmas Park.

However, one neighborhood I represent, Crown Heights, is currently divided into four Council Districts (Council Districts 35, 36, 40, and 41). This is deeply unfair, as it dilutes the voting power of the neighborhood, including the historically marginalized Orthodox Jewish community that lives there. For that reason, I urge the Commission to expand District 40 northward at Kingston Avenue up to St. Johns Place, and then travel south at Franklin Avenue. I also encourage the Commission to consolidate Crown Heights from four Council Districts to three.

Council District 40 is a wonderful place, and I am proud to represent it. The neighborhoods that it is composed of currently are unified by their status of being South and East of Prospect Park, a critical reality when

describing the cultural and geographic state of Brooklyn. Additionally, they share vibrant Jewish and Caribbean heritages in a way that is uniquely New York. I urge the Commission to keep the lines as is, with the exception of including more of Crown Heights to bolster that community's voice.