

ALLIANCE OF SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN LABOR (ASAAL)

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TESTIMONY

Mohammed Karim Chowdhury

National Secretary

Alliance of South Asian American Labor

Thursday, July 7, 2022

Good day.

My name is Mohammed Karim Chowdhury, I'm the National Secretary of the Alliance of South Asian American Labor (ASAAL) with 18 chapters in 10 States including seven Chapters in the five Boroughs of the City of New York. I'm the Council Leader of the Public Employees Federation (PEF). I'm also a Richmond County Judicial Delegate and I enjoy a seat on the Democratic County Committee.

It is a distinct honor and a great pleasure to be in front of these distinguished commissioners headed by Chair Walcott giving testimony on the very important issue of re-districting the City of New York. This process will help determine the political and economic future of the more than eight million citizens of this great metropolis.

I want to speak today about my group of people who are the residents of this great city as they are known as the South Asian Community of New York. South Asia, as you may know, is an amazing part of the world comprising eight great nations: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal. These nations have a lot in common. They share the same ethnicity, culture, cuisine, and moral code. And their population in the world is nearly 2 billion people with 5.5 million living in the USA. In our city, we are the fastest-growing population according to census 2020.

In New York City they are located in all five boroughs but are found predominantly in Queens, Brooklyn, The Bronx, and Staten Island. They are definitely communities of interest who are making their mark in this great City with their education, work ethic, ideas, and prosperity. They are very prominent in the fields of medicine, engineering, education, and science. Many teachers in the Department of Education and Professors at the City University of New York are of South Asian descent.

We generally settled in a poor neighborhood for affordability. Once we moved in we first build our Mosques and other prayer places and soon after we help transform that area into an economic zone with property values increasing many fold. Our children help change bad-performing schools to good-standing schools. From those schools students start going to the best public schools in the City and then to Ivy League schools. We are also the most successful small business owners who are serving the needs of the citizens and giving jobs to thousands of New Yorkers of every persuasion.

Our people need the lines of the city re-drawn so that we can get the political representation in the City Council that we so desperately need. Currently, we have one member of the City Council, in Brooklyn CD 39. We need multiple Council Districts in Queens viz, the Jamaica, Ozone Park, and Jackson Heights area, at least one in the Bronx around the Parkchester, Castle Hill, Zerega, and Westchester Square area, and one in Brooklyn in the Coney Island area. By re-drawing the lines in the above boroughs to create districts comprised of South Asian Community majorities we can get the political representation and economic resources that we so richly deserve.

Therefore, please in your deliberations, create districts of South Asian communities in Queens, Brooklyn, The Bronx, and Staten Island, so that our people can get the proper representation and resources that they need to survive, prosper, and continue to contribute to the City we live in and love.

Thank you.