



## Asian Americans for Equality

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### New York State Senate Senate Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment December 14, 2010

My name is Christopher Kui, Executive Director of Asian Americans for Equality. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Asian Americans for Equality, I would like to thank the State Senate for giving the community this opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

AAFE is a thirty-six year old organization committed to community service and empowerment, targeting immigrants, low-income families, and minorities throughout New York City. AAFE's foundation was built on a dedication for civil rights and equal opportunities, and has since continued to advocate for the City's Asian American and low-income working families. AAFE was a coalition builder during the major revisions to the City Charter in 1989, and helped develop a redistricting proposal that would provide fair and effective political representation. Two decades later, we now see the results of this effort through the election of Asian Americans to the New York City Council and New York State Assembly.

Asian Americans currently represent more than 12% of the City's population, or about one million people. There are more Asian Americans in New York City than there are people in the entire city of Boston, yet Asian Americans remain the least represented in the legislature. The Asian American community has been growing substantially in the past decade, particularly in immigrant gateway communities. According to the Census 2000 and American Community Survey data 2009, in Jackson Heights, where Asian Americans constitute 17.71% of the population, there was a 40.32% growth in the Asian American population since 2000. Brooklyn's Chinatown, which straddles the three communities of Sunset Park, Bay Ridge and Bensonhurst, Asian Americans represent 25.95%, 17.76%, and 32.93% of the district, respectively. This was a growth of 25.69%, 66.63% and 95.23% in the last decade. Queens neighborhoods of Richmond Hills, Ozone Park and South Ozone Park have also been seeing a dramatic increase of Asian Americans. Yet, the only Asian American legislative representatives are two City Council members and one Assembly member, with none representing the State Senate or Congress.

Redistricting serves much importance for immigrant communities. How closely legislative districts align with the fabric of our neighborhoods is crucial to ensuring that minority groups are equitably represented in the City, State and Federal legislature. The redistricting committee needs to preserve districts in the City, State and Federal legislature to, not only maintain Asian American incumbents, but to create districts that will increase the number of Asian American legislators and ensure that the Asian

American community of interest is not gerrymandered, and that the voting strength of the Asian American community is not diluted.

AAFE recommends that district lines be drawn so that Asian American communities will have a better opportunity to elect a representative to the City Council, State Assembly, State Senate and Congress that best represents the community's interests. AAFE also recommends that district lines not be gerrymandered in order to preserve the voting strength of the Asian American communities throughout New York City. Thank you.

Christopher Kui  
Executive Director  
Asian Americans for Equality