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May 2, 2022

The Honorable Patrick McAllister
Acting Supreme Court Justice
Seventh Judicial District of New York
3 East Pulteney Square
Bath, NY 14810

Dear Judge McAllister:

I write to express grave concern that thousands of my constituents, communities of color and millions of other New Yorkers are being denied a meaningful opportunity to present their views as it relates to legislative representation in Albany and in Congress. As you may know, it is my honor to represent the people of New York’s 8th Congressional District in Brooklyn and Queens, one of the most diverse areas in the nation and a district that is more than 70 percent Black, Latino and Asian-American.

The Court of Appeals order which designated you as the sole judicial overseer of a redistricting process affecting 20 million New Yorkers outlined that the Supreme Court must include “any stakeholders who wish to be heard.” In your April 28 ruling, you indicate that any person seeking to participate shall appear for a hearing on May 6, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. in person at the Steuben County Courthouse in Bath, New York. According to the Court, if one of my many diverse constituents in Brooklyn or Queens wanted to appear in person to express their views about the redistricting litigation, their only opportunity to do so would be to venture to Steuben County, New York on a single work day this week.

The Steuben County Courthouse is not readily accessible via public transportation. There is no airport in or around Steuben County. Amtrak does not go to the Village of Bath. It is apparently a nearly ten-hour bus ride from New York City to your location, requiring someone in Brooklyn to leave in the middle of the night, take the subway to Port Authority and depart at 1:30 a.m., only to arrive late to the hearing you have scheduled. As you probably know, most people in New York City do not own a car and use public transit to get to work, school and houses of worship. Even if someone could afford the expense of a rental car – a burden that should not be imposed on anyone looking to participate in the democratic process – it would be a five-hour drive to the Steuben County Courthouse.

For the reasons set forth above, it would be all but impossible for millions of downstate residents in and around the city of New York to participate in the singular hearing that you have scheduled. The court must immediately schedule additional hearings at locations accessible throughout our state, including in New York City, Albany and Buffalo before ruling on legislative and congressional districts drawn by an unelected, out-of-town special master.

As you know, New Yorkers from every walk of life, race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and zip code are reflected in their elected representatives in Albany and Washington. A fair and impartial judicial process concerning redistricting must be democratic and inclusive of perspectives from across our diverse state. At the moment, Black, Latino and Asian-American communities, particularly in downstate New York, are at risk of being systematically excluded from the redistricting process. That is not acceptable.

I look forward to your prompt response regarding the scheduling of additional hearings.

Sincerely,



Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, NY-08

Cc: Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, New York Court of Appeals
Commissioners, New York State Board of Elections