

Dear Redistricting Committee:

We are writing today to ask that the Redistricting Committee reconsider its decision to split the neighborhood of Jamaica Plain between the new 7th Congressional District and the new 8th Congressional districts and reassign the entire neighborhood to the 7th Congressional District.

First, please consider that as currently drawn the Committee's map divides a neighborhood that thinks of itself as one place and has worked hard over the years to build a community that includes everyone. The new line would not just divide people who share a zip code and a supermarket, but who share a series of neighborhood social events, local political organizations, and even book clubs and crime watches. We are very much one neighborhood and we know that we all have a stake in our neighbors future. The new line however encourages one half of Jamaica Plain to see its stake tied on Boston's other urban neighborhoods, while encouraging the other half to look to the suburbs. That is not a division we want in our neighborhood.

Worse, the new line resurrects an old line. Years ago Jamaica Plain earned its reputation as an activist neighborhood by rising up against a highway slated to run through the middle of our neighborhood. The proposed congressional district line takes the highway's route bisecting our neighborhood. It won't create the physical barrier the highway did, but it will create a political one that will be all too real as we strive to continue a shared community life.

As a neighborhood, we have worked hard, with some success, at integration and creating a community life that includes the diverse populations within our neighborhood. Because this new line places majority people of color precincts in one political world and majority white precincts in an entirely different one, it will set back some of the progress we have made in building a cultural and political life in Jamaica Plain that brings people together. That would be sad, and it is unnecessary.

Jamaica Plain belongs in the new 7th Congressional District. Although many of us are white, our community of interest lies with Boston's diverse urban neighborhoods. We have chosen to live here because we wanted to be part of urban life and live with a diverse group of people. To lump our political future instead with the homogenous suburbs (and a few homogenous neighborhoods of Boston) is an incorrect reading of where our community of interest lies.

We respect the Committee's commitment to drawing a district that will provide opportunities for candidates of color to win a seat in Congress. We share that goal. Including both halves of Jamaica Plain in the 7th Congressional District will not be injurious to that goal at all. White voters in Jamaica Plain have a long history of supporting candidates of color at every level of government—for many of us the majority of our elected officials are already people of color. Including all of Jamaica Plain in the 7th Congressional District makes it more and not less of a district of opportunity.

Please consider the harm this new line will do to our neighborhood cultural and political life and consider our true community of interest. We ask you to redraw the line and include all of Jamaica Plain in the 7th Congressional District.

Sincerely,

Georgia Hollister Isman
Reuben Kantor
Annie Rousseau
Melissa Threadgill

On behalf of the Jamaica Plain Progressives, a group of active Jamaica Plain residents working together to organize our community around progressive values.