

## Testimony before the Senate Standing Committee on Elections

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Thank you for the invitation to speak today. I appreciate the opportunity to share my recent experiences as a voter in New York City.

First, I want to say that my experience with Rank Choice Voting in this year's city primary election was very positive. I am a member of a Brooklyn-based community group and we did a lot of voter education and outreach around RCV, so although I had never voted in an election using RCV before, I was already very familiar with what it is and how it works. My experience when I voted last month could not have been better. I was first offered a card explaining RCV by a Board of Elections worker before walking into my Early Voting poll site. Once inside, information about RCV was available throughout the poll site. The same card I had been offered outside was available at my check-in table, too. As the poll worker was placing my ballot in the privacy envelope, she explained that the inside of the privacy envelope also included detailed instructions on how to fill out a ranked choice voting ballot. This is in addition to the RCV material I and other voters received from the Board of Election in April as well as a postcard from the NYC Campaign Finance Board in the weeks before the election. While there is always—always—more to be done on voter education and engagement, my own first experience with RCV was a positive one, as it was for friends and neighbors I have spoken with. And I will say as well that I could not be happier that the City Council in 2022 will be not just the most diverse council the city has ever had, but it will be majority female. I strongly believe RCV is a contributing factor in that outcome. I'm also grateful another \$15 million or more does not need to be spent on two runoff elections we would be having under the previous plurality system.

I also wanted to speak today about notification—or lack thereof—of poll site changes to voters. This is not a new problem. For this most recent primary, Brooklyn increased the number of Early Voting poll site locations from what were available last year. That's a great thing! Some locations that were sites last year were not sites this year. That's understandable. For both reasons, some voters were assigned to different Early Voting locations. I was one of those voters. To be clear, I'm not upset about the change of location. I learned about it weeks ahead of the primary because I used the online poll site locator tool. A tool other voters may not know about or has access to.

I did not, however, learn of the location change from the BOE's April mailing, the mailing sent to all NYC voters ahead of the primary election. Nor, therefore, would any of the voters in my neighborhood who would have also been reassigned to the new location. The BOE is required to send out a mailing to voters 65 to 70 days before an election.<sup>1</sup> That's a reasonable amount of time. However, the BOE has until early May to finalize the Early Voting poll site locations, a deadline, given the scheduling of the June primary, will always be after the BOE's mailer is required to be sent. That poll site location deadline is part of the Early Voting legislation passed in 2019, which is also when our June federal primaries and September state/local primaries were

consolidated to June. However, these two deadlines do not line up and, therefore, do not serve us, the voters.

I am so grateful New York now has Early Voting. It was long overdue. I'm equally grateful for the new, more modern elections laws the state legislature has passed in the last few years. These reforms are necessary to make it easier for New Yorkers exercise their franchise. I urge this committee and your colleagues in the Assembly to take a look not just at these two particular deadlines, but more broadly at all of the deadlines the BOE is working with, and adjust as needed to better serve us, the voters. It could also be more efficient for the BOE, too.

There's a lot about the way our elections are administered in New York that need to change. Some are structural changes that will take longer to achieve. Others are ones I hope the legislature will address in the interim, including but not limited to, the various deadlines imposed on the BOE within existing (and hopefully future) legislation and whether they conflict with providing voters the best information they need to cast their ballot—and where voters must go to vote is among the most basic of information.

Thank you.

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i § 4-117. Check of registrants and information notice by mail: 1. The board of elections, not less than sixty-five days nor more than seventy days before the primary election in each year, shall send by mail...a communication, in a form approved by the state board of elections, to every registered voter who has been registered without a change of address since the beginning of such year...The communication shall notify the voter of the days and hours of the ensuing primary and general elections, the place where he or she appears by his or her registration records to be entitled to vote...If the location of the polling place for the voter's election district has been moved, the communication shall contain the following legend in bold type: "**YOUR POLLING PLACE HAS BEEN CHANGED. YOU NOW VOTE AT...**".