



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

July 24, 2020

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

Enclosed for the consideration of the Council of the District of Columbia are the "*Open Polling Places Emergency Amendment Act of 2020*" and its accompanying emergency declaration and temporary version.

The bill amends the "*District of Columbia Election Code of 1955*" to require the District of Columbia Board of Elections to operate no less than eighty polling places during the November 3, 2020, general election.

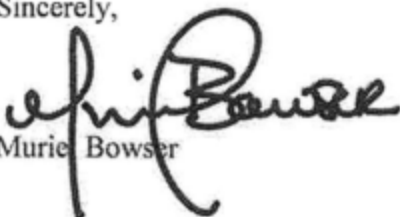
Prior to the June 2, 2020 primary election, the Board of Elections encouraged District residents to participate in early voting and use mail-in ballots. Due to demonstrated concerns with the mail-in ballot process, such as failure to receive ballots by mail, or failure to receive confirmation of receipt of their ballots by the Board of Elections, many District residents chose to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote in-person.

Unfortunately, the Board of Elections did not sufficiently prepare for the demand of in-person voting, and failed to open all of their polling places. Consequently, District residents were forced to wait in unacceptably long lines, for very long hours.

This legislation would require *at least* 80 polling places to be opened, however to be clear, it is my belief that a polling place should be open in *all* 144 precincts to guarantee the vote. When we all vote, we need all polling places open. Moreover, by opening the maximum number of polling places we ensure maximum voter turnout and that all District voters can exercise their constitutional right to vote without substantial hindrances. Additionally, social distancing may be appropriately practiced.

I urge the Council to take immediate action on the enclosed legislation.

Sincerely,


Muriel Bowser


Chairman Phil Mendelson
at the request of the Mayor

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to require the District of Columbia Board of Elections to operate no less than eighty polling places during the November 3, 2020, general election.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Open Polling Places Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2020".

Sec. 2. (a) There exists a need to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to require the District of Columbia Board of Elections to operate no less than 80 polling places during the November 3, 2020, general election.

(b) On June 2, 2020, the District of Columbia Board of Elections conducted the District's primary election.

(c) Prior to June 2, 2020 the Board of Elections encouraged the use of early voting and mail-in ballots. However, many residents chose to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote in-person either by preference or because of demonstrated concerns with the mail-in ballot process, such as adequate tracking of their request,

1 failing to receive their ballot by mail, or receive confirmation of their mail-in ballot being
2 received by the Board.

3 (d) The Board of Elections did not adequately plan for the level of in-person
4 voting, decided not to open all of their polling places and in fact drastically reduced the
5 number of open polling places on June 2, 2020.

6 (e) As a result of the limited number of polling places, District voters were made
7 to wait hours in unacceptably long lines, with many still waiting to vote past midnight the
8 following day.

9 (f) To ensure maximum voter turnout and that all District voters have an
10 unfettered opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote it is necessary that the
11 Board of Elections operate no less than 80 polling places during the November 3, 2020
12 general election.

13 (g) Moreover, opening no less than 80 polling places will instill confidence in the
14 voters that they are able to appropriately socially distance themselves from others at
15 polling places.

16 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the
17 circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it
18 necessary that the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 be amended to require the
19 District of Columbia Board of Elections to operate no less than 80 polling places during
20 the November 3, 2020, general election.

21 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.