



TO: State Elections Board
FROM: Aklima Khondoker, Georgia State Director
DATE: August 10, 2020

Re: State Election Board Special-Called meeting

Thank you for convening this meeting.

In-person voting is a defining feature of our democracy and it must improve for voters in November - even as the state expands access to absentee voting, during the pandemic. Georgia voters are diverse, and include people without internet or mail access, people with disabilities, and people who require language assistance to vote. These voters rely on in-person voting to cast their ballots securely, safely, and independently. **As members of the board consider election rules changes today, consider issuing a commonsense plan to keep polling places open, safe, and accessible so that every Georgia voter can make their voices heard.**

Keep polling places open by encouraging and supporting county election offices with increased support for poll worker recruitment, which may include necessary funding to hire workers and working with the Governor to allow existing state workers to take the day off to serve as poll workers on election day. Additionally, voters need more access to polling places, through adding more early vote sites. Polling places should not be closed or consolidated, but should be resourced adequately to ensure that more voters can vote in person. Adequate resources include providing enough voting machines, scanners, ballot paper, and poll workers to accommodate all voters on election day.

Lack of election day resources causes long lines, as we have witnessed during Georgia's primary day, but no voter should be forced to wait longer than 30 minutes to vote. Keep polling places safe by supporting counties with increased PPE, sanitation products, and sanitary guidelines. Keep polling places accessible by ensuring that each location is ADA compliant and can accommodate voters of diverse mobility. It is important that polling places remain open, especially in communities composed of people who are often disenfranchised because of their disability, the language they speak, or their race.



Voters in these communities have been more likely to suffer disenfranchisement – even when voting absentee. As All Voting is Local’s analysis has found: in Chatham, Gwinnett, and Cobb Counties, Black, Hispanic, and Asian voters comprise a smaller share of absentee ballots than their population size, yet they experience a larger share of rejections. It is no surprise or secret that certain populations are more likely to be disenfranchised than others. So, it is imperative that the board establish and publish a plan to assure voters, of all communities, that they will have unencumbered access to our democracy through open, safe, and accessible in-person voting.