



February 1, 2022

Dear Supervisor Cowles,

Early voting has successfully expanded voter participation in Florida and given voters greater options as to when and where they vote. Early voting encourages voter turnout and helps prevent voters from missing work time in order to cast their ballots. Early voting is also one of the most important mechanisms to facilitate a safe election during a pandemic because it gives voters the option to cast their ballots without facing the crowds and lines on Election Day, and it reduces health risks for election staff. Early voting can also create cost savings due to the need for fewer voting machines or polling places on election day. It is also worth mentioning that [63.8%](#) of registered voters in Florida opted to use early voting options during the 2020 General Election.

As you are aware, Orange County voters also take advantage of early voting availability throughout the county. In the 2020 General Election, more than 40% of Orange County voters opted to vote early in-person, compared to just 16.8% who voted on Election Day.

Unfortunately, not all voters in Orange County have equitable access to early voting sites. Based on a list of 10 early voting locations for the 2022 cycle provided by your office to All Voting is Local, we have identified a gap that affects residents of the Lake Nona community and adjacent areas. Using Valencia College's Lake Nona Campus as a centralized location to analyze the distance to the closest early voting sites, we've determined that these are the Southeast Branch Library on Semoran Boulevard and the Meadow Woods Recreation Community Center. Both sites are at least 10 miles away from the campus. This could be anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour round-trip drive, not including potential toll fees and the time it would take voters to cast their ballots at the early voting site. This presents clear obstacles to those without transportation and to those with tight work schedules. An early voting site in Lake Nona would greatly improve the ability of many business owners, employees, students, and residents of this growing area to vote.

As budget decisions are being made ahead of the 2022 election cycle, we urge you to place an early voting site in the Lake Nona region so members of our community can have better access to the early voting process.

Cordially,

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