

Greetings to the committee, and fellow speakers,

I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak today. Not just to voice concern, but to speak highly of many of my fellow NYC BOE workers; both in Election Day Operations, and at borough offices as well. There are some great people out there if not for whom I and others would not have been able to vote, including some speaking today.

However, having said that, some policies have been put into place, obviously prompted by the current pandemic and seen as necessary compromises to facilitate and certify the poll site staff workforce during it, which have may contributed to the difficulties experience during the June 2021 primary election. I fear those policies will continue to impair the effectiveness of the workforce, and one especially – the current method of training that workforce.

That is what I'd like to focus on today, the instruction and training process of election day workers. I can speak to it with some competence as I have worked for the BOE in the capacity of Election Day Operations staff since the 1990s and having filled positions from (Shoup) Voting Machine Poll Clerk, Election District Table Inspector, Information Clerk, (ES&S) Scanner Inspector, (ES&S) Ballot Marking Device Inspector an in a supervisory position as well as Poll Site Coordinator; both on election days and during Early Voting.

Having had been trained and certified annually for decades might give me some insight as to the subject of training, but I also speak as a trainer and instructor of classes for the aforementioned positions in addition to Accessibility Clerk and Interpreter for several years as well.

This is why I feel I can say the current method of utilizing online training methods is not sufficient to educate the workforce, and in my capacity of Poll Site Coordinator, I can attest to witnessing the effects of that deficiency.

The standard method of training, which had been conducted largely unchanged for the last few decades, was a scheduled class at a training site instructed by one or more trainers projecting a PowerPoint presentation, introductory and equipment videos as well as an overview of the Poll Worker Manuals and document samples the trainees were provided that day, alongside assistant trainers providing hands-on demonstration of voting equipment and concluding with a written test. After the passing of that test, the trainee was certified to fill the position of Election District (ED) Table Inspector, Scanner Inspector, or Ballot Marking Device (BMD) Inspector at a poll site.

However, changes largely began to take effect during the previous election training cycle preceding the last presidential election. At that time, the standard method of training had been conducted as before, albeit with strict adherence to COVID-19 sanitization procedures, Personal Protective Equipment, and social distancing.

Yet, during that cycle some prospective poll workers were offered the choice of instead attending an online training session offered by a BOE contracted company, and some poll workers, fearing physical interaction, chose this option despite realizing election procedures would require similar interaction.

That online training largely constituted the contents of the PowerPoint presentation and included videos, but obviously without the possibility of any hands-on demonstration, supplied physical copies of literature or manuals.

While this might have seemed sufficient, in practice I met with, and worked with, staff who were not educated on the procedures required to perform duties on election day, and who themselves had not watched the videos online, or did not have a sufficient understanding of them having not interreacted with them before. Yet, despite this, they had still been certified. This had been because completing the session itself, regardless of proficiency that could be determined by a written test, was the by which it was judged. Sadly, according to several workers who had conducted this version of the class, technical issues allowed even partially completed sessions to mark as completed.

The detriment to the workforce seemed apparent during that subsequent election, and I had hoped those issues would be resolved going forward, alongside the continuation of physical classes following COVID-19 guidelines, but

it was not to be. The BOE, at least in the borough of Manhattan, had seemingly made online training the default option preceding the June 2021 Primary, with physical classes being limited and upon request. What previous issues that presented themselves before would likely occur again, but with the added pressure of educating the workforce on a new fundamental change: Ranked Choice Voting.

Something that might warrant added reinforcement by a trainer, was now streamlined into what was mostly an even further truncated "refresher" version of the previous online training course, with added implied reliance on the standard Poll Worker Manual, which again would not be physically supplied to the trainee before election day.

What would further exacerbate matters was that certain procedures had changed since the last printing of the Poll Worker Manual and were only shown as a slide presented during this training session. This was presented without emphasis that the trainee ought to take note of it, as there would be no physical copy of this presentation to rely on. Such procedure changes, such as changes to input codes used for the E-Poll Book to assist during a voided ballot procedure, were not known by staff, which led to calls to an already overburdened phone staff at the borough office(s).

Adding that a printing change to the ballots occurred after even the senior Lead Trainers had trained supervisory EDO staff, leading to confusion for even Assembly District (AD) Monitors (the senior staff in the field) as well as an average < 50% reporting of assigned poll site staff for sites, not to mention a printing error on the end-of-day "Return Of Canvass" Election District tabulation form, and what might have already been a strained election for introducing a fundamental change like RCV alone was made nightmarish.

Having had a staff confident in their training, and at least educated to previous levels might have alleviated some of this; especially considering how overburdened they already were by understaffing and having to educate the voting public themselves on a new change.

I would like to say in closing on the matter of training, that what physical training I described was already a consolidated version of what some years ago was initially three separate classes for the aforementioned positions, with the longest of which once having lasted six hours for just one of them. During that time, each trainee was given a full education on their role and responsibilities. Last year, one four-hour class inclusive of a ten-minute bathroom break and a thirty-minute test covered all three positions, with a unified manual that is further truncated and streamlined. That was once a burden unto itself, long before the inception of online training.

In our current time, I would hope education would expand, and not contract, and certainly not at the cost of our voting process. I count myself lucky to have played a part in helping the current workforce function and hope to continue with more tools at hand; not less. I hope the committee members can assist our local Board of Elections in making that happen.

Thank you to all my fellow poll work staff and those at the BOE we rely on.