

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



GEORGE M. BORRELLO  
SENATOR  
57TH DISTRICT

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August 17, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo,

With the critical November election now just 78 days away, I am writing to relay the grave concerns expressed recently by elections officials concerning any potential changes to the voting process.

This bipartisan group of witnesses, who participated in the recent joint legislative hearing on voting and the 2020 primary election, included officials from the New York State Board of Elections (BOE), the New York City Board of Elections and the New York State Election Commissioners Association.

New York State Board of Elections commissioner Douglas A. Kellner, the Democratic co-chair, stated that he alerted your office that in order to have any chance of successfully executing changes, such as mailing absentee ballot applications to every registered voter or even just adding postage paid return envelopes to absentee ballots, they would have needed those requests communicated by July at the latest. No such guidance or instruction was provided.

Elections professionals from across the state are already expecting a record number of absentee ballots in November. New York City experienced a 12-fold increase in the June primary, according to New York City Board of Elections Executive Director Michael Ryan, and the general election may see that volume quadrupled.

If the primary is any indication, just throwing money at eleventh-hour changes will not solve implementation problems. Although an additional \$24 million in federal and state taxpayer dollars was dedicated to the June primary, a staggering 23 percent of primary ballots were ruled invalid, unintentionally disenfranchising tens of thousands of New York voters. The logistical challenges created by an unprecedented volume of absentee ballots flooding a system that, as co-chair Peter Kosinski said, "was built to have voters vote on voting machines," were insurmountable.

Our BOE officials confirmed in the hearing that no amount of funding will make it possible to successfully implement last minute changes. Yet, even if money alone could prevent a repeat of the June primary problems, it's still money that our state does not have to spend.

Governor, our system of government depends on the integrity of our elections. We can have bitter political battles during campaigns, but in the end the voters must have faith that their vote will count. They must believe that despite the politics, the process is sound.

The poor outcome resulting from changes made to the June primary has undermined the confidence that the electorate must have in our election process. So, I ask that you do the right thing and listen to the election professionals tasked with carrying out the November election duties and make no changes to the process at this point.

The most important goal for the November election, and all elections, is to maintain the integrity and faith in our electoral system. Any changes now will shake the foundation of our democratic election process.

Sincerely,



George M. Borrello

New York State Senate, 57<sup>th</sup> District