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September 22, 2022

Via Electronic Mail Only

The Honorable Odette Ramos
Baltimore City Council
100 Holliday Street, Room 505
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Councilmember Ramos:

On behalf of the Baltimore City Board of Elections, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the 2022 Gubernatorial Primary Election. The City Board shares your commitment to making sure voting is easy and convenient for every eligible voter in Baltimore City, and to safeguarding the integrity of our elections.

State Administrator Lamone's letter describes in detail the process that we (and every other local board of elections) went through to assign voters to the correct district following the 2020 Census and the redistricting of the State's Congressional and General Assembly districts. I would like to highlight just a few points.

First, I am deeply grateful to the staff of the City Board for the incredibly hard work they performed over many months to prepare for this election, to carry it out, and to canvass the ballots and prepare results afterward. They performed much of this work under even greater time pressure than usual and they deserve our recognition and heartfelt thanks. The State Board also provided significant support, as it does to all the local boards. I am also grateful to the many Baltimoreans who gave their valuable time to serve as election judges at our early voting and election day polling places. Together, our staff and election judges made it possible for more than 94,000 of our citizens to cast ballots in this election, the highest turnout in a gubernatorial primary in a number of years.

Second, Administrator Lamone correctly identifies the root cause of the issues you have noted: the very short window of time between when new legislative district boundaries were finalized, in mid-April, and the deadline to finish assigning voters to the correct districts and precincts, in mid-May. After the new districts were accepted by the Court of Appeals, we received PDF maps from the City (two examples are attached) showing locations where a precinct had been moved to a different district or where a new district line divided an existing precinct. We used that information to manually assign all affected voters to the correct precinct and district. Nearly all City voters were assigned to the correct district and received the correct information. However, we understand that an error affecting even a single voter is a serious problem that we have a duty

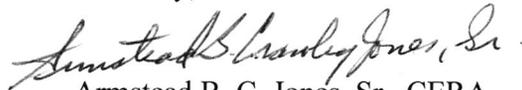
to immediately address. We worked with the State Board to identify voters who were initially assigned to an incorrect district and to correct the issue.

Third, there is no reason to believe that these issues affected the outcome of any contest in the election. All of the voters who had initially been assigned to an incorrect precinct or district were identified prior to Election Day. When we identified an issue, we provided a correct voter card, sample ballot, and/or mail-in ballot to the voter, by hand delivery if necessary. (Note that we do not send a sample ballot to voters who will be receiving a mail-in ballot.) We also provided a list of affected voters to early voting sites and Election Day polling places and instructed election judges on how to assist these voters. These instructions ensured that affected voters would receive and be able to cast a provisional ballot for the correct precinct and district, even if the wrong information was listed in the electronic pollbook.¹ Those provisional votes would have been counted for all races in which the voter was eligible to vote, assuming the voter had not already returned a mail-in ballot. The State Board assisted during canvassing to ensure that the correct ballot was counted for each voter.

Finally, because all voters have now been assigned to the correct precinct and district, we do not expect these issues to recur in the general election or in future elections. For future redistricting cycles, we will also identify to the City, well in advance, the data format in which we need to receive updated precinct and district maps, to maximize efficiency in reassigning voters. Also, as you are aware, City Council redistricting has not yet occurred for the 2020 census cycle. Receiving a finalized City Council district map, with all legal challenges resolved, as far in advance of the 2024 primary as possible will be the best way to ensure that no similar issues occur in the 2024 election cycle.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address your questions.

Sincerely,



Armstead B. C. Jones, Sr., CERA
Election Director

cc: Members of the Rules and Legislative Oversight Committee
Members of the Baltimore City Board of Elections
Linda Lamone, State Administrator of Elections
Honorable Brandon M. Scott, Mayor

Enclosures

¹ We did not receive any reports of a voter being turned away from a polling place altogether due to an incorrect precinct assignment. Even if a voter appears at the wrong polling place, that voter is entitled to vote a provisional ballot and have their vote counted for all races in which they are eligible to vote based on their place of residence. We will emphasize this rule during election judge training in the future.