

June 2, 2020

Michael Bennett
Chairman, DC Board of Elections
1015 Half Street SE
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20003

Alice Miller
Director, DC Board of Elections
1015 Half Street SE
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairman Bennett and Director Miller:

I am deeply disturbed by the large number of DC voters who have contacted my office to say that they wanted to vote safely in today's primary election, requested an absentee ballot from the DC Board of Elections through various platforms, and never received a ballot in the mail. Many of these voters made multiple attempts to contact the Board to receive a ballot. Some are currently out of town and have no opportunity to vote in person. This raises serious questions about how the Board processed absentee ballot applications, whether voters were disenfranchised due to dysfunction, and whether results might be skewed because of who ended up receiving an absentee ballot and who didn't. That is simply unacceptable.

In the last 24 hours, I have received over 380 emails from DC voters who requested an absentee ballot, did not receive one, and then learned they can receive a ballot via email. Right now, at 5 pm, I am receiving a request almost every minute for an emailed ballot. My office received an explanation from Board staff that some of these voters are independents who are not eligible to vote in this primary election. Yet because many of these requests were generated by a mention of the email ballot option in my newsletter or through my Twitter account, I know many of these voters personally and I know they are registered Democrats.

And given my email newsletter and Twitter account have a limited audience, I am concerned that many more voters, especially those without access to Wi-Fi, did not even know such an option existed.

My office has been forwarding these requests to the Board, and I know you have processed a number of them. I think the Board should honor all requests for email ballots from voters who did not receive their absentee ballot at least until 8 pm tonight. Therefore, I have a few questions about processing these email ballot requests.

- What is the deadline for a voter and my office to make a request for an emailed ballot?
- I understand the deadline for returning absentee ballots by email is 8pm tonight. What is the justification for such an early deadline?
- Since many residents applied for an absentee ballot, and never heard back from the Board, including never receiving a confirmation email, how is the Board determining if a voter applied before the deadline?

Because of the uncertainty and chaos surrounding this election, I am requesting that the Board continue accepting emails asking for absentee ballots until 11:59pm tonight, continue to send out

ballots until all applications have been evaluated, and accept returned absentee ballots sent via email for at least seven days after today.

I also hope that the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety will conduct a full investigation of the primary and what happened with absentee balloting. I do not want a repeat of this in November.

I look forward to your immediate response.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Silverman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elissa Silverman,
At-Large DC Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Labor and Workforce Development