

**Testimony before the
New York State Standing Committee on Elections
New York State Assembly Committee on Election Law
Regarding the Implementation of Early Voting during the
2019 General Election**

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Good morning Chair Myrie, Chair Lavine and esteemed members of the Senate and Assembly Election Law Committees. Thank you for inviting the New York State Board of Elections to this hearing on the implementation of early voting in New York State. We are Robert Brehm and Todd Valentine, Co-Executive Directors of the New York State Board of Elections (State Board).

2019 has been a transformative year in terms of Election Law Reform. Early voting, enacted on January 24, 2019, as Chapter 6 of the Laws of 2019, was one of fifty election reform bills passed by both houses of the State Legislature.

New York State became the 39th state in the nation to implement early voting. The justification for enacting the legislation was to make it easier for eligible voters to get to the polls and cast a vote during the nine additional days of early voting. By adding nine days of early voting to the regular election day, for a total of 10 days of “in person” voting, combined with the availability of absentee voting, access to the polls has increased.

The first early voting period in New York State was the nine-day period of October 26, 2019 through November 3, 2019, ahead of the November 5, 2019, general election. The 2019 general election consisted primarily of local elections along with a number of state supreme court seats. Early voting was implemented prior to the November 2019 general election will be seen as a learning experience ahead of the of the April 28, 2020 President Primary, the June 23, 2010 Federal and State primary and the 2020 General Election.

County Boards of Election were provided with nine months to implement early voting and approximately six months to implement, including procuring, testing and training, electronic poll books. By all indications, including press coverage, turnout numbers, feedback from election administrators, and even special interest groups, early voting implementation was

successful. Voters reported enjoying the convenience of selecting a day and having time to go and vote. Wait times were minimal and the experience was streamlined.

County Boards of Elections are to be commended for the amount of effort, hard work and determination to implement a new program in such a narrow time frame and with minimal fiscal support.

Elections at their core are run by people. Election administrators take great care in the accuracy of the job they do and stand ready to take all the steps needed to ensure that voters are registered, ballots are produced, and the votes are counted in a fair, open and transparent process.

The strength in our election system is in this decentralized structure. There is no single point of weakness that can be co-opted. State and local election officials work tirelessly to ensure the integrity of the election system and to implement early voting Statewide. Election officials not only prepared for the implementation of early voting and, at some locations, the roll out of electronic poll books and on demand ballot printers, but also have set contingency plans in place to continue to run the election and report the results, should an issue arise.

The State Board of Elections is holding a series of statewide roundtable meetings on the early voting experience scheduled in December 2019. Our goal is to obtain feedback from election administrators, interest groups and technology vendors on the implementation and cost of early voting. Our goal is to report the findings of the roundtable meetings to the Legislature. In addition to that effort, the State Board has compiled the attached report, "The Implementation of Early Voting in New York State."