

July 24. 2021

To:
Senate Elections Committee Chair Sen. Zellnor Myrie,

Poll worker testimony:

My name is Stacy Bergener, I am a poll worker in the 44th Assembly district. I am mostly assigned to the John Jay HS polling site but I have also worked at other polling sites.

This year was the first year John Jay was an early voting polling site.

I worked 5 days and the primary at John Jay - these are some of the issues that I encountered:

The police officer on the first day of early voting did not receive all the information he needed to do his job at our poll site. Some of the important duties of the police officer at polling sites are to note the public count and protected counts on all scanners and electronic poll books. The officer on our first day of voting took the information from all the electronic poll books but seemed surprised when I asked him to do the same for the scanners. He had to call his precinct to make sure I gave him the right info.

Our Co-coordinator for our early voting site was switching our positions every day because she stated that we all had to know how to do all positions - it was very disruptive and mistakes were made. I realize that all poll workers need to know how to work as many positions as possible but this election was an important election where I felt we needed to make sure that we were as careful as possible.

One of the mistakes made was on a scanner - a poll worker who had never worked the scanners before left the black support frame in the ballot bag with all of the cast ballots zipped it shut and locked the bag. After the Coordinator realized what she had done he broke the seal, took the support frame out and locked the bag with a new plastic lock - all of this without another witness or police officer witnessing the procedure. This is not how we are trained, we are all trained that the ballot bags are VERY important and if we make mistakes there are steps to be followed.

Every scanner has a scanner book. This is where all public and protected counts are entered every morning and then at closing in the evening. During the day the book is stored in a plastic holder behind the scanner but at closing it should be locked inside a plastic sleeve in the ballot box door. I discussed the incident with the ballot bag and the scanner books with the co-coordinator and was told that it was her job to worry about these issues and I should not worry. I do worry about these things, our elections and voting rights are under attack, we need to be very vigilant about how we run our elections and how we handle the ballots. I was very upset about how casual she was about the mistakes.

On another day a voters ballot got jammed in a scanner and it took the coordinator 10 min. to get the ballot out of the scanner. He then straitened the ballot out, went to another scanner and scanned it in. In the mean time the voter had left, and again no police officer/ coordinator to witness what happened.

We had to have a generator at our site during early elections because the HS electrical grid was not capable of supporting the printers and poll book at the ballot stations. on the 4th day the generator ran out of gas and voters had to wait until the coordinator got a tech to the site. Who is in charge of making sure the generators have enough gas? I know when I worked at other sites the generators never ran out of gas.

These issues are just the issues that upset me the most and I felt were important. Sadly, the Board of Elections does not pay attention to any complaints made by poll workers and polling sites can be a very abusive place for poll workers. I have seen some very ugly scenes between coordinators at sites and poll workers, also coordinators yelling at voters and making them cry. Last year the coordinator was extremely abusive to a handicapped poll worker, and all of the female poll workers. When some female poll workers complained they were told " go ahead and complain, I'm untouchable, I have someone protecting me at the Board" Sadly, this is very common that employees at the Board are abusive to the poll workers and nothing happens to them. Every year I swear I won't work again because of how the Board of Elections treats poll workers, but I know that there is a shortage of poll workers. It is not surprising that the board can not recruit or keep more poll workers.

There are other issues that I would like to discuss with you - if you would like to reach out to me I can be reached at:

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Respectfully,
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