

Attention:

The Honorable Senate Elections and Ethics Committee Chair Jeremy Moss

Thursday April 20th, 2023

Dear Senator Moss,

In the November 2022 election, Michigan voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal 2, which amended the state Constitution to protect our fundamental right to vote and expand access to the ballot. On Wednesday April 19th, Secretary Benson shared the budget estimate showing that implementing Proposal 2's new requirements will cost as much as \$72 million, on top of the \$105 million needed to address historic disinvestment in election administration. In respect of the will of the voters, we implore you to fully fund implementation of Proposal 2 and commit to predictable, sustainable, and equitable funding of our elections. Election administrators and voters deserve certainty and stability.

Free, fair, and secure elections are the bedrock of democracy, and such elections require effective administration. Yet in Michigan, elections officials have for years called attention to the lack of sustainable funding for election administration¹, which leads to chronically underfunded elections. Local clerks are often left to administer elections on insufficient budgets and short timelines.

Election administrators are part of critical infrastructure. Implementing the Constitution's new requirements is not discretionary, and the Secretary of State and clerks have emphasized that it will require significant work by and resources for election officials. These resources are necessary to provide the locations, access, staff, training, technology, transparency, audits, and other procedures that ensure the integrity of our elections leading to greater access to the ballot for all Michigan voters.

Proposal 2 requires, among other things:

- At least one secure drop box for every 15,000 registered voters in municipalities with more than 15,000 registered voters. According to a Voters Not Politicians Education Fund report, 41.6% of municipalities are not in compliance with this requirement currently and will need to purchase and operate one or more (additional) drop boxes in their jurisdiction;²
- A minimum of 9 consecutive days of in-person, early voting. Jurisdictions will require funds for rental space, poll worker pay, and technology to satisfy this requirement for all federal and state elections. Some municipalities may be able to share costs, but according to the latest analysis from MDOS, early voting implementation will cost more than \$45 million;
- Opening at least 431 early voting centers in 2024, according to analysis from clerks and voting rights advocates;
- Prepaid postage for all absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots; and
- Creating a new ballot tracking system.

We encourage you to continue engaging with the Department of State and local clerks to gather their input on their budgets for carrying out their Constitutional mandates under Proposal 2, as well as other responsibilities in future elections. Michigan voters have made our commitment to a strong democracy,

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<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/michigan-clerks-we-need-more-money-guidance-implement-early-voting>

²https://votersedfund.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Implementing-Proposal-22-2_-Ensuring-the-Equitable-Distribution-of-AV-Drop-Boxes-3.pdf

characterized by free and fair elections, clear by passing *three* pro-democracy Constitutional amendments since 2018. We request that our state leaders prioritize Michigan's elections and create a permanent system to fund elections sustainably, ensuring voter accessibility and the integrity of our results. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these important matters at length in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

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