



## Executive Summary

### **Preliminary Report Analyzing the June 2, 2020 Primary Election, Outlines a Path Forward**

This preliminary report outlines the successes and challenges experienced during the June 2, 2020 Primary Election. Given the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on the city's resources and DCBOE staff, coupled with significant challenges surrounding the mail-in balloting process, the Board of Elections will present the findings below, along with a more in-depth assessment of the primary election to Mayor Bowser and the DC Council.

Holding an election under these conditions was uncharted territory and forced us to condense 18 months of planning into less than eight weeks as a result of COVID-19. While we acknowledge there were significant challenges, we now have a clearer vision of how to proceed for the general election. The DCBOE will provide a full accounting of what we learned and specific recommendations on a path forward for the November General Election in the weeks ahead. We will encourage the public to participate in the hearing process and help us continue to rebuild trust in our election process.

DCBOE experienced the following challenges during the recent primary election:

- Loss of over 1700 poll workers who had committed to working during the primary election to only 365 workers to serve at 20 Vote Centers for 10 days.
- Voter ballot requests, just under four times that of previous elections, proved to overwhelm our Vote4DC Mobile App and request-by-email process. Thus, a number of requests were not processed in a timely fashion.
- The Vote4DC Mobile App proved incompatible with various types of mobile devices used by some voters. The application's vendor was unable to triage and correct the problems in a timely fashion, and in some instances was unable to correct the problem at all and nonresponsive despite numerous requests for assistance and trouble tickets submitted.
- The technical challenges caused some voters not to receive a ballot by mail. The increased voter turnout on Election-day, coupled with COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, caused voters to experience longer than usual wait times at the Vote Centers.
- Many voters who timely completed their ballot requests could not track the status of their ballots. This led to understandable confusion and frustration.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, DCBOE's processes did yield some positive outcomes. DCBOE:

- Operated 20 Vote Centers for 11 days, including Election Day, all of which were accessible to voters from all 144 precincts.
- Deployed 365 trained workers throughout the early voting period to assist with the Early Vote Centers. Faced with a shortage of workers due to COVID-19, DCBOE deployed all available DCBOE staff members to Vote Centers to assist with keeping the centers running smoothly.
- Implemented an effective communications campaign to immediately engage District of Columbia voters to request their ballot by mail or vote at one of 20 Vote Centers via multiple press conferences, virtual meetings with DC leaders and community and political organizations, a digital ad campaign, postcards, and print, TV, and radio ads. The communications effort worked; the requests poured in at rates we had never seen before.
- Processed over 92,000 absentee ballot requests when our systems previously processed only a quarter of that number.
- Offered multiple voting methods, including expanded use of no-excuse absentee (mail-in) ballots.
- Issued a Voter Guide to each party-affiliated registered voter. Each Voter Guide included two Absentee (Mail-in) Ballot applications and a postage-paid return envelope that many voters utilized.
- In response to voters who did not receive their absentee mail-in ballots in time, DCBOE used overnight delivery for out-of-state ballots, reissued ballots to those who had not previously received them, and even hand-delivered ballots in some instances.

Among the forthcoming detailed changes, DCBOE plans to incorporate the following elements into its forthcoming strategy to be shared with Mayor Bowser and the DC Council:

- Secure a partnership with a mailing house vendor to mail a ballot to every registered voter in the District of Columbia
- Double the number of vote centers for early-voting
- Deliver a plan to modernize DCBOE's technology so that it can accommodate