



Remarks of Marisel A. Hernandez, Chairwoman
Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago
October 27, 2020

Joining me today are: Executive Director Lance Gough; Assistant Executive Director Charles Holiday, Jr.; Legal Counsel Adam W. Lasker; Strategic Planning and Communications Consultant James P. Allen; and Finance Director Peter Peso.

I want to thank the 13,500 Chicago voters who have stepped forward to serve as Election Judges – putting us in a better pre-election position than ever before. I also want to recognize the more than 300,000 voters who have returned Vote By Mail ballots through both the mail and at our new Secured Drop Boxes – and the more than 200,000 voters who have cast ballots at Early Voting so far. We currently are on pace to receive 750,000 pre-election ballots. The previous record, set in 2016, was roughly 400,000 pre-election ballots.

On Election Day, we will be keeping our 51 Early Voting locations and drop boxes open – in addition to our precinct polling places. In short, Chicago voters will have more in-person voting locations than any time in the last 25 years.

To prepare for this election, we had to change dozens of Early Voting locations to schools. We also had to relocate hundreds of Election Day precinct polling places to provide. The most common reason was to provide social distancing.

Looking to next year, the Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago has a recommended budget from the City of \$19.175 million; however, this includes more than \$5 million in recently-awarded grants, some of which will be used to cover many expenses related to this unique and challenging election: PPE, new equipment, postage and other mailing costs. Our actual 2021 corporate budget will be approximately \$4 million less than the corporate budget for 2020.

Our biggest activities in 2021 will include maintaining voter registrations and performing the canvass. Next, we will perform the once-a-decade re-mapping of wards, precincts, Congressional and legislative districts for the 2022 election cycle. The Board also will be working on petition filing and objections in advance of the 2022 Primary.

In closing, I want to express our gratitude to the Mayor's Office and the City Council, but also the leaders from OEMC, the Chicago Public Schools, the Police Department, the City Colleges, the Park District, the Chicago Public Library, the Office of Budget and Management, Assets, Information and Services (AIS), Procurement Services and Transportation. These agencies are all critical to our ability to offer successful programs for Early Voting and Election Day Voting.

With that, I look forward to answering your questions.