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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES



JAMIE RASKIN
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
8TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND REFORM
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
VICE CHAIR

July 20, 2020

Montgomery County Board of Elections
18753 N. Frederick Avenue
Suite 210
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Dear Members of the Board of Elections,

I write to strongly oppose the surprising proposal to move one of the County's early voting sites from the Rockville Executive Office Building (EOB) to the Bauer Community Recreation Center. The EOB site is not only vastly more accessible to many voters, but also is a well-established and well-known resource for Montgomery County residents who wish to vote early. Especially given the many other disruptions Maryland voters are facing this year – some unavoidable, some inflicted by other ill-advised policy choices – I urge you not to make this harmful and completely unnecessary change.

Maryland voters are already struggling to understand how to vote safely in November. Governor Hogan decided to conduct the primary predominantly by mail, sending ballots to all registered voters, and this proved to be a safe and effective choice which enabled a strong turnout. But the Governor now has disastrously reversed course and says the state will only send voters absentee ballot applications for the general election, rather than the ballots themselves. This change makes no sense given that COVID-19 is still circulating and increasing in most states, and may in fact be worse and resurgent as winter approaches.

The Governor's decision is certain to confuse voters, many of whom will undoubtedly be expecting a ballot in the mail once again rather than just an application. While I hope the Governor will reverse his baffling decision, thus far he is standing by it. That means state and local elections officials must already conduct a massive public education campaign to let voters know how to cast ballots in November. This proposed relocation of a key early voting site at the Rockville EOB would add yet another layer of confusion, requiring still more education and presenting still more risk of errors that could harm participation.

Early voting is an essential resource to space out participation by voters who cannot or will not vote by mail this fall, and to promote the safety of voters and election workers alike. The Rockville EOB is a traditional early voting site in the county and for good reason; it is accessible by Metro and multiple bus lines, and is in close walking distance of many who live and work in Rockville. We should not throw another destabilizing and confusing change into the mix by moving early voting to a new and untested location that is primarily accessible by car. I appreciate that the recreation center is a

large space, but the EOB offers significant voting space along with ample outdoor space where voters can wait in socially-distanced lines if necessary. The bottom line is that we can make our traditional site work well and we should not turn voting into a game of hide-and-go-seek.

We owe it to the Montgomery County voters to minimize the chaos and disruption around voting while ensuring safe options to cast their ballots. This means doing all we can to educate the public about how to vote by mail this fall, and making sure that the accessible and traditional early voting site of the Rockville EOB remains available for early voting.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or if I can help in any way.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Raskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

Jamie Raskin