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To the House Elections and Ethics Committee

Thank you for your interests in how the August 2020 election shaped up from the local clerk's perspective. I would like to state that I can only speak from my experience as it relates to my perspective. I know that you all are very busy so I will get straight to the point from my perspective.

Significant challenges were encountered for the following reasons:

1. **Lack of Communication to the local clerks from the Secretary of State-** Implemented changes to processes that deeply affect the local clerk's ability to administered the election were not communicated. I found out about implemented changes to processes that deeply affected my job on Facebook, Twitter, and through press conferences rather than being notified that changes were going to be implemented from the Secretary of State or the Bureau of Elections (BOE). These changes were implemented with no input from local clerks and how processes would be affected. This ultimately led to a loss of confidence in our leadership.
2. **Lawfulness of Implemented Changes-** There were several changes made by the Secretary of State that raised questions as to whether or not the changes were actually permitted under current election law. This left the local clerk guessing as to how to proceed. Several times we were told that the BOE would not defend or support the local jurisdictions in a court of law should a lawsuit arise. This meant more time and money from the local jurisdiction being spent on consultation with our local attorney and attorney fees.
3. **Lack of Consistency with Executive Orders-** The Governor implemented executive orders prior to the August 2020 election that lacked clarification on how they would affect the voting process in regards to the requirement of mandated masks for voting. Why are masks mandated for every business, and government building, along with small gatherings of people, but somehow, masks are not necessary to protect election workers, clerks, and voters where it is likely that there will be a large number of people gathering to vote? This decision placed the local clerk in a very difficult and divisive position. We were expected to provide PPE for our workers and mandate they wear it, but we could not protect them from voters who refused to wear a mask or who may have been sick and decided to vote in-person.
4. **Inconsistency with PPE Messaging-** The BOE encouraged local jurisdictions to source their own PPE when supplies were scarce. The impression was given that the BOE would work on a reimbursement program for that PPE. The decision was then made that there would be no reimbursement, but instead the State would provide PPE to each jurisdiction based on how many precincts you had. This in turn placed another financial burden on local jurisdictions.

I was able to be fully staffed with precinct election inspectors. I could have used one more election inspector in my absentee counting board to represent the Democrat Party, but I was unable to find someone to fit that description. We had a total of four workers in our absentee counting board. I would like to have five for the November 2020 election.

We are a small jurisdiction and did not have an issue with our precinct location.

**Personal Protective Equipment:**

As part of my planning and implementation of protection for my election inspectors, I started sourcing items that I thought I would need back in April. I knew we would need to be proactive and respond before items became scarce and could not be purchased. My husband and I built plexiglass sneeze guards, not only my jurisdiction, but for other local jurisdictions too. I sourced hand sanitizer and purchased enough to get through the August and the November elections this year. I was under the impression that a reimbursement program would be put in place to recover these funds. I paid for all of the PPE out of my personal account. Imagine my disbelief when we were told that there would be no reimbursement and we could just use any surplus of supplies we personally had purchased in November. Thankfully, my fellow township board members dug deep into the budget and found the money to reimburse me.

I did request supplies from the State's Supply Order form. I received two magnetic white boards before the August election and a drop box after the August election. I am still waiting for the automatic envelope opener to arrive. The items I ordered are being used to make the processing of absentee ballots more efficient as I already have the PPE covered from being proactive myself. I am grateful for the State's offer of supplies even though it did not reach us in time for the August election.

As far as lessons learned, I always knew that local clerks are resilient, dedicated, and determined to succeed and get the job done no matter what the circumstances. The August 2020 election just proved this point beyond measure. There is a wealth of knowledge among our clerk community. I would love to see the State tap into some of it so that we can all make Michigan elections as successful as possible.

**Changes for the next election:**

I will continue to review my protection plans to make sure that I am providing the most up to date information to my election inspectors and will strategically implement any changes necessary for the upcoming November election. I have taken an inventory of the supplies I have and will make sure that we are well prepared even if we do not receive any PPE from the State for the November 2020 election.

I plan to have my drop box installed prior to the November election so that my voters have a convenient place to drop off their ballots should they choose not to mail them.

The biggest change I would like to see for the November election is more communication with local clerks from the State level. It would be nice to be informed of upcoming changes, rather than finding out the changes have been implemented and made public. I do believe that the BOE is doing their best to try to achieve this goal.

Collaboration between local clerks, the BOE, and the Secretary of State would be ideal when talk of implementing changes occur.

Thank you for your time and interest in these matters. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me. I am happy to provide any clarification from my perspective that I can.

Respectively submitted

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