



December 7, 2020

**Testimony of Mona Davids, President, Social Impact Strategies
To The New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations**

Good afternoon everyone, thank you to Chair Cabrera, the council members, and especially BLAC for conducting this hearing and providing me the opportunity to testify.

My name is Mona Davids and I am the president of Social Impact Strategies, a Black, African immigrant, women owned business based in The Bronx. We are NOT a non-profit. Allow me full disclosure to state: My company launched a Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) Voter education service at the end of this past October because I was concerned about the lack of RCV Voter Education in my community and throughout the city. Our RCV Voter Education is an approved campaign related expense for candidates and their campaigns. We do not charge the general public for our trainings, we seek sponsors to cover the costs.

Testimonials from attendees speak to the high quality of our trainings. We are committed to providing information to the public with the greatest integrity and in full compliance with the letter and intent of law.

In November of 2019, I voted NO on the referendum for Ranked Choice Voting. I was outspoken about my concerns on the lack of education about this new electoral system that was being voted on, in a low turnout election, without enough education to the public on what it is or how it works. The voters in Massachusetts just voted NO on their referendum to switch to Ranked Choice Voting. When the Massachusetts voters were interviewed, they said they voted no because they did not understand it and there was not enough information provided to voters to educate them about RCV.

New York City voters need to know the layout of the new ballot, how to mark it completely and successfully, how to avoid ballot errors, and how their vote will be counted. The

election in which Ranked Choice Voting was voted on had a low turnout, so voters in 2021 may be shocked to see a new configuration on their ballots.

I fully understand the position of those who say Ranked Choice Voting must be delayed because the majority of NYers do not know what it is or how it works. I understand why they say the lack of Ranked Choice Voting voter education will disenfranchise their communities. I expected a robust, comprehensive, massive, citywide voter education public awareness campaign, once Ranked Choice Voting was passed in November 2019, but there was none.

I expected the proponents of Ranked Choice Voting to have Zoom webinars when Covid-19 hit and then to launch a mix of citywide in-person and virtual trainings on Ranked Choice Voting when restrictions were lifted, but there was none to our communities, for our senior citizens, or our immigrants in their languages.

I understand the Board of Elections was dealing with the herculean task of conducting primary and general elections during a pandemic. I thank and applaud the BOE staff and poll workers for the extraordinary work they did. I have worked as a poll worker and coordinator. The Campaign Finance Board, which is mandated under the city charter to provide voter education, has done a great job through their program, NYC Votes, engaging NYers to vote in this year's primary and general election; and with managing the historic number of 2021 candidates registering in their matching funds program.

However, I also do believe there still should have been RCV voter education during 2020. The CFB, BOE, RCV proponents that pushed for this new electoral system, and you, the City Council -- all dropped the ball on engaging the public and providing RCV voter education through a public awareness campaign. There is no reason for zero voter education and information to our communities. These agencies, including the City Council, could have hired additional staff or contracted out the voter education campaign. There could have been mailings, digital campaigns, and information distributed at poll sites in June and November titled: "Ranked Choice Voting is Coming to NYC in 2021 - What You Need To Know". The same vigor that went into passing this new electoral system should have been applied to educating voters throughout the year.

New York City's first RCV races will be two special elections in Queens, then followed by special elections in the Bronx. I do believe the BOE, CFB, and City Council can prepare NYers

for Ranked Choice Voting working together with stakeholders on the ground in these communities. Stakeholders must properly understand how Ranked Choice Voting works.

For example: Absolutely nobody who claims to provide RCV education should tell voters that it is acceptable to rank just one candidate unless that statement is immediately followed by the warning that ranking just one candidate -- bullet voting -- is the fastest and easiest way to get your ballot exhausted and no longer included in the election: the very problem RCV is supposed to solve. And yet, this is the very message being shared to educate voters about RCV.

Another example is voters being told you need 50% to win with Ranked Choice Voting. That is incorrect. Candidates need 50%+1 to win.

Lack of Voter Education equals Voter Disenfranchisement and Voter Suppression. Next year's municipal elections are too important.

We need all hands on deck, no more excuses, and no more delays in educating voters.

Thank you.

For more information about our trainings, visit RankedChoiceVoting.nyc

###

Contact details:

Mona Davids

President

Social Impact Strategies

Phone: (646) 872-7149

Email: mona@socialimpactstrategies.us

Twitter: [@MonaDavids](https://twitter.com/MonaDavids)

Website: SocialImpactStrategies.us