

Statement for the Voter Assistance Advisory Commission Public Hearing

First of all, I so appreciate having this opportunity to give feedback on my experiences, both as a voter and as an Election Protection poll monitor with Common Cause – NY, on this most recent election.

This past election day, I volunteered as a poll monitor at PS 6, on 6 Snyder Avenue in Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY, from 8 to 10 in the morning. These were some of the busiest hours at this polling place as people hurried to cast their vote before they went to work or otherwise started their days.

When I arrived at PS 6 right before 8am, the line to vote was already very long, stretching from the entrance of the school down the long block on which the school was located, around the corner, and almost all of the way down a second, shorter block. Once people got to the front of the line, they told me that they had had to wait for about 1 1/2 hours to get to that point and they still had not yet signed in and received their ballot.

In those two hours, at least two people told me that that they were currently missing their shift at work in order to stand in line to vote. They were upset that they were losing their wages, asking, "who is going to give us back those hours?" Another person had to leave after standing in line for over one hour because she felt that she could not miss an important meeting at her place of work that was soon taking place. Clearly, she had been caught off guard by the long line.

People should not have to sacrifice their hours at work or risk not being able to meet their responsibilities in order to cast their ballot. As a result of my experience at PS 6, I would recommend that New York implement some form of early voting option. Having the opportunity to vote over a weekend would allow people to plan ahead and incorporate voting into their lives with less conflict with their other responsibilities. It would also take the pressure off of the lines on Election Day itself, making the line shorter for everyone.

While participation in our democracy is empowering and exciting, waiting in such a long line to vote was tiring, tedious, and frustrating. Voting is one of the most fundamental ways in which we can participate in our democracy. I believe that people should not have to choose between their wages and their vote. Implementing early voting would help remove this barrier to participation.

Thank you for listening to this statement. I appreciate your consideration.