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One Hundred Eighteenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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May 25, 2023

The Honorable Clifford D. Tatum
Harris County Elections Administrator
1001 Preston Street
Houston, TX 77002

Dear Administrator Tatum,

As Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration, which has broad oversight of our nation's federal elections, I write today to express my deep concerns over the ballot shortage in Harris County, Texas, that occurred during the 2022 midterm election. For voters to have confidence in our elections, they must believe their ballot will be counted, and counted according to law. Unfortunately, based on the record amassed in Harris County, it is not clear voters have that confidence.

As you may know, the Committee on House Administration this Congress has taken a serious interest in voters disenfranchised because of government-created ballot shortages. In late March, the Committee held a hearing on the shortage that occurred in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on Election Day 2022.¹ Our hearing gave disenfranchised Luzerne County voters the chance to be heard, something the Committee will highlight whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Initially, Harris County's post-election analysis estimated that 46 to 68 voting centers ran out of their initial allotment of paper.² But further investigation from KHOU discovered 121 voting centers did not initially receive enough ballot paper to cover voter turnout as the counties only received 600 ballots even though several counties exceeded that number by hundreds on election day.³ Moreover, the Houston Chronicle's investigation concluded 20 of those 121 locations showed clear signs of a shortage beforehand.⁴

¹ 2022 Midterms Look Back Series: Government Voter Suppression in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania: Hearing Before the Committee on House Administration, 118th Cong. (2023). <https://cha.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/2022-midterms-look-back-series-government-voter-suppression-luzerne>.

² Jeremy Rogalski, *KHOU 11 analysis: Election ballot paper shortage bigger than estimated*, KHOU 11 (Jan. 30, 2023) <https://www.khou.com/article/news/investigations/election-ballot-paper-shortage-harris-county/285-0abb3602-a724-4c08-a07b-1264eea8c790>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Jen Rice, *4 things voters should know about the Chronicle's investigation into Harris County's ballot shortage*, Houston Chronicle (April 20, 2023) <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/houston/article/what-to-know-harris-county-ballot-shortage-17880076.php>.

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While the shortage affected both Democratic and Republican voters, the data suggests it more heavily affected Republican-leaning precincts. Of the 29 locations where the Harris County GOP said there was a paper shortage or an equipment problem, 55 percent were in neighborhoods that voted Republican in the 2020 presidential election.⁵ In fact, thirteen locations were in precincts President Trump won by more than 10 points.

In response to these facts, please identify what steps your office has taken to:

- (i) investigate the ballot shortage in the 2022 election and to release any reports to the public;
- (ii) ensure no voting center in Harris County has a ballot paper shortage in any upcoming federal election;
and
- (iii) restore voter confidence and to ensure voters that a ballot will be available when they next attempt to vote in person.

I look forward to your response. Please send your response and any questions you may have by June 2, 2023, to Caleb Hays, General Counsel and Deputy Staff Director, at Caleb.Hays@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration

BGS/ad

⁵ *Id.*