

Charter Revision Commission 2019

250 Broadway, 26<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10007

June 10, 2019

Dear Commissioners,

As you weigh the numerous potential issue areas to address through the Charter Revision process, we, a coalition of voting rights advocates, urge you to select Ranked Choice Voting as one of the ballot proposals that the public will vote upon later this year.

As the City constantly strives to revise and improve its democratic systems – Ranked Choice Voting for all city offices is an important option to consider. We are championing a top five candidate Ranked Choice Voting system for all city offices in primary and special elections in place for the 2021 election cycle. If implemented, Ranked Choice Voting would not only create a more efficient and representative electoral system, but also would equalize the voting process for frequently disenfranchised communities, save the city money by eliminating the occasional but costly runoff election, and produce consensus candidates.

Our nonpartisan coalition includes a diverse array of organizations working to improve New York City, from groups protecting the voices of marginalized communities, to those supporting increased civic engagement and participation in our election process. Ranked Choice Voting has also gained support from Attorney General Letitia James, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Speaker Johnson, and Council Members Espinal, Kallos, Lander, Levin, Levine, Powers and Reynoso.

As you've seen at the borough hearings, our grassroots support demonstrates the popularity of Ranked Choice Voting amongst voters frustrated with having to choose the 'lesser of two evils' instead of who they truly support. In 2017, over 61% of multi-candidate primaries were won with less than 50% of the vote, which led to a lack of support for the ultimate choices in the general election. The "winner takes all" system in our city reduces the amount of choice we have in determining our representatives, disenfranchises entire communities, and encourages negative campaigning.

When Maine became the first state to use Ranked Choice Voting for both statewide and federal elections in 2018, many questioned how the process would work on such a large scale. Despite doubts, voters overwhelmingly supported the freedom allotted to them in the new system. Until 2018, the majority of Maine's past governors had been elected with less than 40% of the vote. Once the state began using Ranked Choice Voting, voters were able to choose their preferred candidate instead of just opting for who they believed could win.

Likewise, the majority of California representatives were elected with a plurality, primary, or runoff system, leaving many voters unheard in the general election decision-making. The implementation of Ranked Choice Voting in Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco allowed for more voters to have a say in the final electoral outcome. In addition, there was an increase in diversity amongst the candidate pool, as multiple female candidates and candidates of color were able to run without voters fearing a spoiler effect.

Now more than ever, electoral reform is integral to ensure that every New Yorker's voice is heard, and Ranked Choice Voting is the best way to improve our antiquated electoral system. New York has long been at the forefront of amplifying civic engagement, and as a Commissioner, you have the opportunity to make New York City the model for a more fair and functional democracy.

Thank you,

Citizen Union  
The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)  
Citizen Action  
NYPIRG  
League of Women Voters NYC  
Reinvent Albany  
FairVote  
CCHAYA  
Minkwon Community Action Center  
Amplify Her  
Arena  
Empire State Indivisible  
Eleanor's Legacy  
Millennial Politics