



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 New York City elected officials, 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, and we urge you to select Ranked Choice Voting as one of the ballot proposals that the Public will vote upon later this year.

With the City constantly striving to revise and improve its democratic systems – Ranked Choice Voting is an important approach to consider. 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.

As New Yorkers who have run for office, we understand the importance of making sure voters feel confident about their choices come Election Day. While New York has recently made important steps to improve elections by implementing early voting and consolidating election days, we must act further to ensure all New Yorkers have fair access to representative voting.

With our support for Ranked Choice Voting, we join a broad, grassroots coalition of individuals, activist groups, and prominent officials acting in the best interest of their constituents. 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," rather than who they truly support.

Our primary elections are broken: entire communities are ignored, voters are reluctant to vote for their true preference, and winners emerge with very little of the actual vote. With 2021 looming, when 70% of Council Members, all Borough Presidents, and the Comptroller and Mayor will be term-limited out, the time to act is now. 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. In addition, candidates diversified their platforms in order to reach all of their potential constituents, rather than targeting "just enough" voters to 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 to increasing the amount of consensus candidates, 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.

Being a public servant in New York City comes with an immense amount of responsibility, and we cannot shy away from being a trailblazer for reform that the rest of our country can follow. 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 city's unique electoral climate. As a Commissioner, you have the opportunity to make New York City the model for a more fair and functional democracy. We, the undersigned, ask that you take it.

Thank you,



Scott Stringer  
NYC Comptroller



Manhattan Borough  
President Gale Brewer



Justin Brannan  
NYC Council Member



Robert Cornegy  
NYC Council Member



Rafael Espinal  
NYC Council Member



Ben Kallos  
NYC Council Member



Rory Lancman  
NYC Council Member



Brad Lander  
NYC Council Member



Mark Levine  
NYC Council Member



Keith Powers  
NYC Council Member



Antonio Reynoso  
NYC Council Member



Donovan Richards  
NYC Council Member



Carlina Rivera  
NYC Council Member



Ydani Rodriguez  
NYC Council Member



Helen Rosenthal  
NYC Council Member



Ritchie Torres  
NYC Council Member



Paul Vallone  
NYC Council Member



Jimmy Van Bramer  
NYC Council Member



Andrew Gounardes  
NYS Senator



Brad Hoylman  
NYS Senator



Brian Kavanagh  
NYS Senator



Liz Krueger  
NYS Senator



Julia Salazar  
NYS Senator



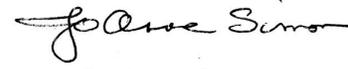
Harvey Epstein  
NYS Assembly Member



Walter Mosley  
NYS Assembly Member



Linda Rosenthal  
NYS Assembly Member



Jo Anne Simon  
NYS Assembly Member