

**City of Detroit**  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**

**Janice M. Winfrey**  
*City Clerk*

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*Deputy City Clerk*

Chairperson Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the threats facing election administrators in Detroit and across the country for simply doing their job. My name is Janice Winfrey. I am the City Clerk and Chief Election Official for the city of Detroit. In this elected non-partisan position, I am chiefly responsible for keeping the official records and documents for the City, clerking the council and administering all elections in Detroit.

As a local election official, I do the work to ensure that all eligible electors can vote. I educate voters, order ballots, identify polling locations and staff the polls. I am trusted to uphold democracy in our great city. As election administration becomes increasingly complex (which includes unfunded mandates), my colleagues and I continue to rise to the occasion to ensure free and fair elections.

Detroit, also known as the Motor City, is nationally recognized as a comeback city. We have come through bankruptcy, a mass exodus of population, the loss of manufacturing jobs and have made it through a global pandemic — where we were defined as a hotspot. Approximately 80% of Detroiters are Black.

During the 2020 General Election, President Trump made numerous false allegations of voter fraud-insisting that the election was stolen. Consequently, state and local officials from both parties, poll workers and election staff were and still find themselves under attack. Threats were made against me, my staff and Detroit poll workers by phone, by email, and in person, such as when they counted the absentee ballots on Election Day. Trump and his conservative allies filed several lawsuits against me and other Michigan election officials as part of their ongoing mis- and disinformation campaign that blames election administrators for their loss at the polls. All of these lawsuits were eventually deemed frivolous and deceptive in nature and some of the attorneys are now facing sanctions.

Even still, during the 2020 Presidential Election, Detroit, despite being in the middle of a pandemic and civil unrest, experienced a 51% voter turnout. Of the approximately 250,000 electors that voted, 174,000 cast their ballots by absentee, which was a record for the city. Detroit voters had a tremendous impact on the outcome of the Presidential Election in Michigan.

Because of the spike in absentee ballots, coupled with the state restrictions on processing and counting absentee ballots prior to the election, I expanded absentee ballot operations by renting additional space in the TCF Center in order to accommodate the necessary temporary staff, observers and others necessary to complete absentee ballot process transparently and safely. The necessary staff included uniformed security and police. During the tabulation of absentee ballots at the Center, multiple GOP challengers had to be removed because of disruptive conduct. Some

wore intimidating masks over their entire face, others banged on the walls and windows shouting "STOP THE VOTE", others violated social distancing standards and, as required by COVID-19 rules, refused to place protective masks over their noses when asked. It appeared that this disruption attempted to undermine the tabulation of absentee ballots.

A couple of weeks after Election Day, during the canvass of elections, I received a call from the Michigan Secretary of State Benson explaining that the Wayne County Board of Canvassers would refuse to certify results unless I testified. During that time both my husband and I were diagnosed with COVID-19 and were quarantined. Nonetheless, to ensure the certification of the election, I left my husband's side at the hospital, and reported to my office, wearing multiple masks and adhering to as many recommendations of health officials as possible, but still placing staff in harm's way, to prevent the state board from disenfranchising hundreds of thousands Detroit voters by testifying. Upon the completion of my testimony, the harassment commenced. I received an insulting text message on my private cell phone, insults came by way of social media and through my inbox. The greatest threat came when, one morning while taking a walk to clear my mind, an unknown Caucasian male approximately 6'3" and 250 lbs approached me in my neighborhood and abruptly stated "I've been waiting for you at work and decided to come by your house. Why did you cheat?" and "Why did you allow Trump to lose? You are going to pay dearly for your actions in this election!" He approached me in a threatening manner, coming closer and closer and my only recourse was to yell, "I have COVID-19 and I will spit on you." Fortunately, a neighbor was driving by and asked me if I was ok. I immediately responded, "No! This man is threatening me." At that point, my neighbor began blocking his movement with her car to ensure that I could safely get home. Later that evening I received a message on Facebook stating that he was going to blow up my block and that I was a chicken head and ugly in person. That's when I called the Detroit Police Department and explained this horrific encounter. As recently as February 2021, I was notified by the Detroit Police Department that my life was threatened by white supremacist and that the police would be patrolling my home for the next couple of weeks. My husband and I decided to simply leave town.

Our government is elected by our citizens therefore voting is crucial to our democracy. Our job as local election officials is essential as we are required to protect the act of voting. I ask that you consider it unlawful to harass, intimidate and/or threaten local election officials while performing our duties as election administrators. Thank you.