

**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED MICHIGAN SENATE BILLS 273
THROUGH 311 THAT, IF ADOPTED, WOULD RESTRICT ACCESS TO VOTING**

By Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones

WHEREAS, Michigan’s November 2020 statewide election, which included the presidential election, was the object of numerous audits and unsuccessful court challenges, all leading to the same conclusion – it was one of the most secure elections in Michigan history; and

WHEREAS, A record number of citizens participated in the election, despite the extreme adversity presented by conducting an election in the midst of a global pandemic. It is estimated that approximately 3.3 million absentee ballots were cast in Michigan out of approximately 5.5 million total votes; and

WHEREAS, Access to absentee voting was greatly expanded by Michigan voters’ adoption of a 2018 ballot initiative, which amended the Michigan Constitution to allow no reason absentee voting, as well as automatic voter registration and same day voter registration. Significantly, the initiative passed by a two-to-one margin; and

WHEREAS, In 2018, Michigan voters also adopted a Constitutional amendment to establish a commission of citizens with exclusive authority to adopt district boundaries for the Michigan Senate, Michigan House of Representatives and U.S. Congress, every 10 years – further demonstrating the desire of citizens to level the partisan playing field. The redistricting commission, whose work has been delayed by the census, will complete its work in the next year; and

WHEREAS, On March 24, 2021, several state senators introduced a package of thirty-nine (39) proposed bills, now pending in the Senate Committee on Elections, addressing perceived insufficiencies in the state’s election process. In effect, however, the proposed legislation is not a “fix” – unless the “problem” to be remedied is too many Michigan citizens being able to vote. The bills’ subject matter includes, but it not limited to, the following: absentee voting provisions, ballot drop boxes, voter identification requirements, polling place challengers, election administration rules, and video surveillance of vote counting; and

WHEREAS, Several of the pending bills will have a serious negative impact on citizens of the City of Detroit. *Senate Bill 273* regulates ballot drop boxes by requiring unduly restrictive, unrealistic, and unfunded security protocols. The bill requires that all such boxes be approved by both the Secretary of State and the board of county canvassers for the county in which located, including existing boxes; if not, they must be removed. Beginning in June 2022, specific video recording, motion detecting, and lighting must be in place. Boxes must be specifically labelled, only certain employees may collect the ballots, and a “chain of custody” log must be maintained; and

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 284* prohibits the State or a local unit of government from accepting a grant from an individual or entity to be used for election related equipment or activity, including advertising, voter information, registration materials, etc., even if the state fails to adequately fund the election; and

April 23, 2021

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 285* severely restricts access to absentee ballots/voting by mail by requiring an applicant for a ballot to present a voter registration card or submit a copy of the voter's identification with the application. Otherwise, the voter can only be issued a provisional ballot. This requirement also applies to deployed members of the uniformed services, including those serving overseas; and

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 286* prohibits the use of drop boxes on election day and after 5 p.m. on the evening before election day – when the boxes have been observed to be heavily used by voters; and

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 287* prohibits the Secretary of State from providing funding to or reimbursing a city for prepaid postage on absentee ballot envelopes, as well as prohibiting a city or township from providing same; and

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 303* bans the current practice of allowing a voter without identification from signing a sworn affidavit to access a ballot. Rather, in such circumstances, a voter would be provided with a provisional ballot only; and

WHEREAS, *Senate Bill 310* is among the most egregious of the proposed “reforms”. It proposes to prohibit sending an absentee ballot application to an elector unless that elector first requests such a ballot. However, the bill goes further, prohibiting even a direct link to an absent voter application on the Secretary of State's website. At a time in history when most necessary government forms are readily accessible online, this prohibition is intentionally regressive; and

WHEREAS, Considered individually, or as a whole, these proposed bills serve no apparent purpose other than the obvious, *i.e.*, the disenfranchisement of Black and Brown communities in particular, as well as all historically disadvantaged members of our community – just as the needle was beginning to move in the other direction; and

WHEREAS, Our right to vote is the bedrock of our democracy. Despite the continued cries of the (unproven) need for “reform”, these bills reform nothing. Rather, they serve to silence our city and others like Detroit. They will not make our elections safer and more secure. They will only shut the door in the faces of the citizenry in a manner not seen since the days of Jim Crow.
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, In the interest of promoting much needed access to civic engagement for the citizens of the city of Detroit and the entire state of Michigan, the Detroit City Council strongly urges the Michigan Legislature to reject these proposed new and expanded restrictions on voting access contained in the thirty-nine (39) Senate Bills, SB 273 through SB 311, now pending before the Senate Committee on Elections. **BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, The Detroit City Clerk is directed to send copies of this resolution to the Detroit delegation of the Michigan Legislature, the Michigan Senate Committee on Elections, Mayor Mike Duggan, the City of Detroit's Lansing lobbyist, and Governor Gretchen Whitmer.