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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: September 7, 2023

RE: **RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AS DISABILITY VOTING RIGHTS WEEK**

Council Member Fred Durhal III requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a **RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AS DISABILITY VOTING RIGHTS WEEK**

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER FRED DURHAL III**

**RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AS  
DISABILITY VOTING RIGHTS WEEK**

- WHEREAS,** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four U.S. adults has a disability<sup>1</sup>; and
- WHEREAS,** The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 20% of Detroit’s population is disabled, higher than the statewide average of 13%, and there are roughly 113,000 disabled Detroiters who are of voting age;<sup>2</sup> and
- WHEREAS,** The disability community is diverse, and disabilities may affect a person’s vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, hearing, mental health, and social relationships; and
- WHEREAS,** Both Michigan and federal law establish requirements for polling places, which are meant to ensure that the voting process is accessible to disabled voters;<sup>3</sup> and
- WHEREAS,** Despite legal requirements, surveys of disabled voters in Michigan and across the U.S. consistently identify physical and architectural barriers in polling places, technological barriers with voting systems, and attitudinal barriers from poll workers<sup>4</sup>; and
- WHEREAS,** As Michigan’s largest voting district, the city of Detroit has a duty to do everything possible to ensure that polling places are accessible to disabled voters, who have the right to cast their votes privately and independently; and
- WHEREAS,** The Detroit clerk’s office has made efforts to accommodate disabled voters, such as prioritizing the placement of polling places in buildings that are already ADA accessible and providing the option for curbside voting at polling places; and
- WHEREAS,** Disability rights activists have recommended further measures to expand voting access, including improved coordination mechanisms between local clerks and the Secretary of State so that the state can allocate appropriate resources, clear labeling of accessible pathways at polling places, more training for poll workers on accessibility, and accessible voting booths at all polling locations that allow for private and independent voting;<sup>5</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. “Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic | CDC.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 28, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://data.census.gov/table?q=040XX00US26\\_160XX00US2622000&tid=ACST1Y2021.S1810](https://data.census.gov/table?q=040XX00US26_160XX00US2622000&tid=ACST1Y2021.S1810)

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), MCL 168.662, and MCL 168.795.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Mizner, Eric Smith, The Center for Accessible Technology, Eunice Rho, Diana Scholl, and Claudia Center, Access Denied: Barriers to Online Voter Registration for Citizens with Disabilities, (January 2015) <https://www.aclu.org/report/access-denied-barriers-online-voter-registration-citizens-disabilities>; General Accounting Office, Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance, (October 2016) <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-4.pdf>; National Council on Disability, “Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle,” October 24, 2013. <https://ncd.gov/publications/2013/10242013>; Improving Accessibility for Detroit Voters with Disabilities. <https://www.detroitdisabilitypower.org/pollaudit>

<sup>5</sup> Improving Accessibility for Detroit Voters with Disabilities. <https://www.detroitdisabilitypower.org/pollaudit>

**WHEREAS,** With the passage of Proposal 2 in 2022, Michigan expanded voter access for all voters by, among other things, providing early voting sites, expanding access to absentee voting, and providing ballot boxes across voting jurisdictions for voters to deposit their ballots; and

**WHEREAS,** The Detroit City Clerk’s Office should consider ways to specifically reach out to the disabled community regarding the recent increased access to absentee voting, as it is an effective and reasonably affordable method of accommodating many disabled voters; and

**WHEREAS,** Disability Voting Rights Week is a time to recognize and protect the rights of people with disabilities to fully participate in the democratic process equally alongside non-disabled people; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** That the Detroit City Council hereby recognizes September 11-15 of 2023 as Disability Voting Rights Week.