



Statement of Georgia State Director, Aklima Khondoker, prepared for the DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections on October 21, 2020:

Early voting is a vital option for voters, especially in communities where voters face soaring waiting times on Election Day. For communities of color, wait times of over an hour have become the devastating norm. It is unreasonable for voters to sacrifice significant time —1 hour or more — to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Black and brown voters in Central DeKalb are forced to sacrifice more of their personal time to vote. The average voter of color has to travel 14% farther than the average white voter to reach an Early Vote site.¹ This disparity is due in large part to increased travel times between locations and a lack of Early Vote sites to cover more voters. Voters of color in these areas have reported that they have had to sacrifice appointments, time with family, work obligations, and work pay--time that they will never recover--in order to vote. That is unacceptable.

The DeKalb Board must add at least three early voting sites, Toco Hills and Salem-Panola libraries and Stephenson Middle School, to alleviate the wait time burden on voters. These sites are already available on Election Day, in 13 days. We ask that you accelerate that availability to include early voting from now until October 30. That's only 9 days. We are asking you to give voters 9 days to keep their appointments with their doctors. 9 days to keep their hours at work. And 9 days to spend more time with their families.

In order for this to work, we also encourage the Board to tell voters about new voting sites immediately and add more equipment at each location. As we have seen, voting machines have become overheated from overuse and have become unavailable, causing longer than usual wait-times. Adding more machines will reduce the likelihood of such an issue and will help keep our lines shorter.

Lastly, in order to expedite the voting process overall, it is necessary that elections officials begin preprocessing mail ballots as soon as possible. Given the expected volume of ballots and the long delays experienced by DeKalb during the primary, earlier processing will dampen criticism and ease concerns about the security and accuracy of the count.

¹ *Advance in Person Voting Sites: Past Current and Alternate DeKalb County, Supply Chain Design Partners Report*, prepared for Fair Fight Action, September 26, 2020



Voters give a lot of themselves to access our democracy. Let's work together to ensure that they never have to give more than is necessary to vote.