

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2020

U.S. Election Assistance Commission
Chair Benjamin W. Hovland
Vice-Chair Donald L. Palmer
Commissioner Christy McCormick
Commissioner Thomas Hicks
1335 East West Highway, Suite 4300
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Commissioners:

We write to urge the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to issue guidance that would allow states to use emergency election grants provided under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to create, develop, and improve address confidentiality programs (also referred to as Safe at Home programs) in order to protect the safety of survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, and trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many states include the physical address of registered voters in publicly available records. However, the safety of many survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, or trafficking depends upon their ability to keep their physical location confidential. Given that reported instances of domestic violence have risen sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that survivors of domestic violence be able to shield their physical address from any voter registration forms and public databases.¹ Address confidentiality programs allow survivors to receive election mail, including absentee ballots, without disclosing their physical address. This pandemic will require more voters to cast their ballots by mail than ever before, and it is crucial that survivors be able to safely receive and send election mail.

Nearly 40 states offer some type of an address confidentiality program, though they vary widely in implementation and the protections they give to voters.² Funding to help expand and improve these programs is necessary. It is essential that everyone have a safe and secure way to participate in our democracy and that survivors can register to vote and receive a mail-in ballot without putting their health and safety at risk.

¹ Melissa Godin, *As Cities Around the World Go On Lockdown Victims of Domestic Violence Look for a Way Out*, TIME Magazine, (March 18, 2020) <https://time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/>

² *Press Release*, National Association of Confidential Address Programs (March 2, 2020) https://www.nacap.org/uploads/8/8/9/9/88992652/nacap_press_release_february_2020.pdf

Accordingly, we urge the EAC to issue guidance allowing states to use HAVA funds to implement and expand address confidentiality programs in order to protect survivors' right to vote.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/

Tina Smith
United States Senator