April 10, 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Minority Leader Barclay, Senate Minority Leader Flanagan, Senate Finance Chair Liz Kreuger, and Assembly Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein,

As Congress continues to respond to the funding challenges presented by COVID-19 so must the New York State Legislature and Governor. We write to urge you to revisit the state budget to include language to authorize the use of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding that has already been allocated for 2020 elections in New York State.

The CARES Act stimulus package includes $400 million in new Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds for states to utilize to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus for the 2020 election cycle. States can use these funds to purchase cleaning supplies, protective masks for staff and poll workers, resources to meet the increased demand for mail ballots due to self-isolation and quarantine in response to COVID-19, and temporary staff to process the increased absentee ballot demand. However, in order to qualify for funding, states must commit to a 20% match to be paid over two years.

With your action, New York State would qualify for $20 million through the CARES Act and be required to commit $4 million in match funding funds. County Boards of Elections will likely need to make these purchases regardless of the CARES funding and could qualify as an in-kind match for the grant; but without appropriate statutory language in the state budget, the State Board of Elections will be unable to receive and spend these funds.

Now more than ever, our Boards of Elections need monetary support to fulfill their mission. We urge you to revisit the state budget and include the necessary technical language to allow the State Board of Elections to administer CARES Act funding.

Sincerely,

The Let NY Vote Coalition
Let NY Vote is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of grassroots networks, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, re-entry communities, good government groups, unions, social service providers, immigrant rights groups, and everyday citizens fighting improve our elections by making registering and voting more accessible and equitable for every eligible New Yorker.