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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3212

June 23, 2021

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Mr. Michael Ryan
Executive Director
New York Board of Elections
32 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Dear Mr. Ryan:

I am writing regarding the lack of translation services during this week's election at certain poll sites. I was deeply disturbed to learn that neither Spanish nor Chinese translation services were provided nor available on Election Day, at the Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement House poll site located within the Queensbridge Houses.

I am requesting your assistance in ensuring that every New York City voter has fair and equal access to the polls. The Queensbridge Houses is home to approximately 6300 New Yorkers, including a significant number of residents whose primary language is Spanish or Chinese and is located in New York's 12th congressional district, which I am proud to represent.

Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act requires that Queens County provide translation services in Bengali, Chinese, Spanish and Korean. I understand that that the Board of Elections (BOE) had scheduled interpreters for this site but, when the site coordinator inquired about their absence, they were told by BOE that there was nothing that could be done. This response is unacceptable and shows a disregard for the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) voters in our great city.

The right to cast a ballot safely and fairly is the highest privilege of living in a democratic country and should be accessible to every voter. The lack of translation services at this site disadvantages those voters who rely on these services and may have resulted in voters not being able to cast their vote. In addition, a lack of language assistance creates unnecessary barriers to participation in our democracy. For those reasons, I am asking you to provide me with the steps that your office is taking to make sure that this problem is not repeated in future elections, including the upcoming November general election.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your leadership in making sure every New Yorker has equal access to the ballot. If you have any questions or there is any way my office can be of assistance, consistent with all applicable rules and regulations, please do not hesitate to reach out to Taylor Abbruzzese in my district office at (212)-860-0606.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress