

**Testimony before the Philadelphia City Council
Legislative Oversight Committee**

Mail-In Ballot

July 21, 2020

"Hello, Chairman Jones and members of the Legislative Oversight Committee, my name is Brenda Shelton Dunston and I am here to testify today on Resolution No. 200376."

I'm coming to you as the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Black Women's Health Alliance, a Public Health Professional, Committee person, Poll Watcher, Advocate and most important of all "as a citizen of the United States" who has a right to vote during Elections – as do other citizens of the US.

I successfully exercised my option to vote by Mail-In Ballot during the Primary, however that was not the case for others who attempted to enroll in and use the Mail-In Ballot. The primary election occurred at a time when COVID19 was disproportionately impacting the Black community due to increased vulnerability based on chronic health disparate conditions, systemic health inequities and social determinants of health. As of July 20, 2020, 46.5% of corona virus cases in Philadelphia are occurring in the Black community.

There is an urgent need to rectify any and all operational and marketing issues at all levels to insure that all persons who desire to vote by Mail-In Ballot are able to do so without concern for their health and well-being, therefore I submit the following recommendations:

- Collaborate with community advocates, leaders and ministers to ensure that all citizens are educated and have working knowledge of how to request, receive and submit a Mail-In Ballot
- Conduct a marketing campaign to increase awareness inclusive of door to door flyers, etc.
- Train community partners, advocates and others to conduct outreach and assist family members, neighbors and church members to enroll to vote by mail.

Having the Mail-In option is critically needed NOW as we move towards the November election during the COVID19 pandemic that's in and of itself a "Crisis within a Crisis" within the Black community.