



March 4, 2022

The Honorable Josh Newman  
Senate District 29  
1021 O Street, Room 6520  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 1131 (Newman) Extending “Safe At Home” to California’s Election Workers - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Newman:

Thank you for the opportunity to co-sponsor with the Brennan Center for Justice Senate Bill 1131, your newly introduced legislation to protect California election workers’ safety and privacy by granting them access to enroll in state address confidentiality programs that shield their private information from public records requests.

Over the past two years, those charged with administering California’s elections have been increasingly subjected to threats, harassment and intimidation. Election workers face the risk of “doxing” and harassment as the result of their names, photographs, and addresses being posted online and on social media platforms, as has happened to numerous election officials already around the country. Since November 2020, more than 15% of California’s election officials have left their jobs, some citing increased aggressive and abusive behavior targeted at them.<sup>1</sup>

The “Safe at Home” program has been operating in California over two decades and enables survivors of domestic violence and stalking to shield their personal data from public exposure. Access to this program, which is administered by the California Secretary of State, has been extended to other workers in sensitive positions - reproductive health workers in 2002 and public health officials in 2020. Election officials and their staff, who are the frontline workers of democracy, deserve and are in need of similar protection.

SB 1131 will provide protection and peace of mind to California election workers by extending to them the option of enrolling in one of two existing address protection programs. Eligibility for the Secretary of State’s “Safe at Home” Program would be extended to individuals who are employed by or contract with the Secretary of State or a local election office, allowing election workers the opportunity to have their mail redirected to a substitute mailing address.

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<sup>1</sup> California Voter Foundation, “Documenting and Addressing Harassment of Election Officials”, June 8, 2021, <https://www.calvoter.org/harassment>, citing Los Angeles Times’ April 21, 2021 article by John Myers, “Essential Politics: California’s election official exodus”, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/newsletter/2021-04-12/california-elections-officials-exodus-essential-politics>.

Alternatively, election workers may choose to enroll in an address confidentiality program that enables state and local agencies to respond to requests for public records without disclosing the address of election workers.

In 2021, the California Voter Foundation released “Documenting and Addressing Harassment of Election Officials” to shed light on election officials’ experiences around the country following the November 2020 election. Millions of people believe the Big Lie and other fraudulent claims, and election officials and their staff are the ones having to respond to the dissemination of election mis- and disinformation through social media, anti-government organizations, or partisan political campaigns. We have already seen how domestic terrorists were able to successfully storm the U.S. Capitol and interrupt the certification of the last presidential election. Five people died as a result.

Election workers are understandably reluctant to discuss what is happening. When they do talk about it, some say people giving them a hard time is “part of the job” and the kind of behavior that must be endured. And some of it is. But some of it crosses a line. The threats and harassment have gone too far.

When people have to worry about walking to their cars from their offices at night, or are reluctant to wear any article of clothing in public that identifies them as an election worker, or are leaving their jobs altogether, when they are threatened with death, or their family members are named, or they have to keep a Go bag by their door in case their home is picketed, we must act.

The California Voter Foundation has successfully advanced election security in the state and nation for over two decades. But it was not until the 2020 Presidential Election that we realized the physical safety and well-being of the people who administer our elections is an essential component of election security. California’s voting process is already among the most secure in the country; SB 1131 if enacted will help ensure that the people entrusted with administering it are also safe and secure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Alexander  
President & Founder