November 1, 2024

Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell
General Counsel Paul Cox
North Carolina State Board of Elections
P.O. Box 27255
Raleigh NC 27611-7255

Via Electronic Mail

Re: NCEIT Signs at Voting Places in North Carolina

Dear Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell and General Counsel Paul Cox:

We write to you today to follow up on the letter we sent to your attention on October 22, 2024 regarding signage that has been spotted at polling sites across the state. Since our original report, complaints of intimidation have only increased and these signs have been spotted in numerous additional counties throughout the state. We have also spoken to numerous Latino voters who state that they or their family members were intimidated by the presence of these signs at their polling site. We reiterate our request that the State Board remove these signs as unlawful voter intimidation intended to frighten Latino citizens from exercising their right to vote. We also request that the State Board of Elections release an affirmative statement in Spanish reassuring monolingual Spanish speakers who are eligible voters in this state that they are safe to vote in North Carolina and they have the right to immediately report any intimidation at the polls.

Since the start of in-person early voting on October 17, the undersigned non-partisan organizations have now received dozens of reports that the North Carolina Election Integrity Team (NCEIT) has placed bright yellow signs both in roadways and outside of polling locations, which warn – exclusively in Spanish – that any person who votes in this election who is not a citizen could be charged with a crime and face deportation from the United States – emphasizing the threat of legal action. The NCEIT signs have now been reported by numerous voters, observers, and poll workers who are concerned about the intimidating impact of these signs – exclusively targeting Spanish speaking voters – at polling sites in at **least eleven counties**: Buncombe, Wake, Durham, Orange, Granville, Pitt, Moore, Forsyth, Johnston, Chatham, and Mecklenburg. It is no coincidence that many of these counties have sizable and growing Latino communities. And this list is certainly not exhaustive, as Jim Womack, President of NCEIT, publicly stated that he purchased "just under 1000" of these signs.[1]

We commend the state board for acknowledging that the signs are "unnecessary" because "polling sites have voting rules posted" and "voters sign forms affirming that they are citizens before they are handed ballots." However, we disagree with the State Board's

[1] https://ncnewsline.com/briefs/voter-advocacy-groups-say-polling-place-warning-signs-written-in-spanish-are-intimidation/

recent statement that there is no "compelling evidence that [the signs are] discriminatory or intimidating."[2]

The NCEIT signs placed outside of polling places serve no purpose but to intimidate legally qualified voters from engaging in our political process. A "warning" on a sign in police-tape yellow (a color used as a signal to stay away) has no other purpose than to communicate that reader should be afraid. The recent statements from NCEIT leadership and its members only further confirms an intent by this group to target Latino voters in particular. NCEIT members have recently "rais[ed] the subject of how to spot an 'illegal'", "suggested that a person who can't speak English probably doesn't have the right to vote," and stated that they create signs for polling places in other languages as a version of "psyop…psychological operations aimed at influencing people's behavior." Womack also stated that NCEIT's "antennae are up about the influx of Hispanics, and they're accidentally being registered to vote."[3] These comments are particularly concerning when NCEIT has also expressed an intention to "challenge thousands of voters after they have mailed in ballots"[4] and have stated that one way in which they identify "suspicious voters" is by looking for individuals with "Hispanic sounding last names."[5]

Poll observers and poll workers in several counties have reported concerns that these polling sites do not have any other signs in Spanish, or any other signs giving information about voting requirements, and that these signs are likely to intimidate Latino voters. One such individual reported that these signs appeared to be "geared towards intimidating Latino voters." Another such individual stated that they were "worried about a Spanish-speaking person being intimidated and not reporting it to anyone (because they only speak Spanish) and walking away and not voting."

Since our last correspondence, we have spoken to numerous Latino residents - who are U.S. citizens and registered voters - who have expressed that they find these signs to be intimidating, and that they have heard the same from others in their local community. This includes several Latino residents of Siler City (in Chatham County),[6] which has a 53% Latino population and is North Carolina's first majority Latino municipality. One of these individuals reported that she not only "believes the signs were part of an overall attempt at that voting location to intimidate Latino voters" but that she had seen Latino neighbors leave a polling site without voting after witnessing an NCEIT sign. This also includes a Latino resident of Wake County,[7] who reported that signs were leading naturalized citizens to question their eligibility to vote. We stand ready to provide additional documentation confirming the numerous reports from Latino residents that we've received expressing concerns about the signs.

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[2] https://ncnewsline.com/briefs/voter-advocacy-groups-say-polling-place-warning-signs-written-in-spanish-are-intimidation/

[3] https://www.reuters.com/world/us/be-aggressive-republican-poll-watchers-battleground-states-worry-us-election-2024-10-24/

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/30/us/election-poll-monitors.html

[5] https://www.cbsnews.com/news/election-integrity-north-carolina-voters-hispanic-sounding-names/

[6] Approximately 13.4% of Chatham County's population is Latino.

[7] Approximately 11.5% of Wake County's population is Latino.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we now urge the State Board of Elections to take immediate action to resolve this unlawful targeting of the Latino community, and quell fears being faced by Latino voters who should be clearly and consistently welcomed into the voting process in our state. Specifically, we are requesting that these signs be removed from all polling places, and that the State Board of Elections put out information in Spanish to let monolingual Spanish speakers who are US citizens know that they are safe to vote in North Carolina and that they have the right to immediately report any intimidating behavior at polling sites. Furthermore, we request that the Board make election judges aware of the anti-Latino rhetoric advanced by NCEIT and others, and ask that those election judges pay particular attention to the possibility that the process of challenging voters' ballots could be discriminately applied to target Latino voters based on nothing more than those voters' names and/or appearances.

We stand ready to assist the State Board with any additional information necessary to allow for a swift resolution of this issue.

Sincerely,

Iliana Santillan, Director, El Pueblo

Caitlin Swain, Co-Director, Forward Justice

Kathleen Roblez, Senior Voting Rights Counsel, Forward Justice

Jeff Loperfido, Chief Counsel, Southern Coalition for Social Justice

Cheryl Carter, Co-Executive Director, Democracy NC

Melissa Price Kromm, Executive Director, North Carolina For the People

Ann Webb, Policy Director, Common Cause North Carolina

Marcus Bass, Deputy Director, NC Black Alliance

Serena Sebring, Executive Director, Blueprint North Carolina

Deborah Maxwell, President, North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP

Kristi Graunke, Legal Director
ACLU North Carolina

Chavi Khanna Koneru, Executive Director, North Carolina Asian Americans Together

Danielle Brown, National Field Co-Director, Black Voters Matter

Janice Robinson, Executive Director, Red, Wine, and Blue

Nelson and Joyce Johnson, Executive Directors, Beloved Community Center

Chester Williams, CEO, A Better Chance, A Better Community

Naomi Randolph- Hwesuhunu, Co-Executive Director, Action Institute NC

Rev. Lisa Garcia-Sampson, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of North Carolina

Abby Lublin, Executive Director, Carolina Jews for Justice

Dr. Ashley Marshall, Co-Director, Forward Justice Action Network

Anne Tindall, Special Counsel and NC Policy Lead, Protect Democracy

Dreama Caldwell, Executive Co-Director, Down Home North Carolina

Bishop William J. Barber II, Repairers of the Breach

Rev. Wayne Wilhelm, North Carolina Poor People's Campaign

Jennifer Nwachukwu, Senior Counsel, Voting Rights Project, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler, North Carolina Poor People's Campaign

Tara Romano, Pro-Choice NC

Ilana Dubester, Executive Director, El Vinculo Hispano (Hispanic Liason)