

**City of Detroit**  
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

**Janice M. Winfrey**  
*City Clerk*

**Andre P. Gilbert II**  
*Deputy City Clerk*

**Statement of Janice Winfrey**  
**Clerk, City of Detroit, MI**  
**“Protecting Our Democracy’s Frontline Workers”**  
**Hearing Before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary**  
**June 14, 2022**

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Committee,

My name is Janice Winfrey. I am the City Clerk for the city of Detroit. In this elected non-partisan position, I am chiefly responsible for keeping the official records and documents for the City, clerking the council and administering all elections in Detroit. I am the Chief Election Official in the City of Detroit. As a local election official, I do the work to ensure that all eligible electors can vote. I educate voters, order ballots, identify polling locations and staff the polls. I am trusted to uphold democracy in our great city.

As election administration becomes increasingly complex (which includes unfunded mandates), my colleagues and I continue to rise to the occasion to ensure free and fair elections. Thank you for holding a hearing on the critical and timely issue of protecting election officials. During the 2020 Presidential Election, our Commander in Chief of the United States, President Trump made boisterous false allegations of voter fraud, insisting that the election was stolen. Consequently, state and local officials from both parties, poll workers and election staff were and still find themselves under attack today. Just since the 2020 election cycle, threats have been made against me, my staff and Detroit election poll workers as they counted the absentee ballots on Election Day.

Detroit, also known as the Motor City, is nationally recognized as a comeback city. We have come through bankruptcy, a mass exodus of population, the loss of manufacturing jobs and have made it through a global pandemic — where we were defined as a hotspot. Even still, during the 2020 Presidential Election, Detroit, despite being in the middle of a pandemic and civil unrest, experienced a 51% voter turnout. Of the approximately 250,000 electors that voted, 174,000 cast their ballots by absentee. Detroit definitely had a tremendous impact on the outcome of the Presidential Election. During the tabulation of absentee ballots multiple GOP challengers had to be removed because of disruptive conduct. Some wore intimidating masks over their entire face, others banged on the walls and windows shouting “STOP THE VOTE”, others violated social distancing standards and, as required by COVID-19 rules, refused to place protective masks over their noses when asked. It appeared that this disruption attempted to undermine the tabulation of absentee ballots. A couple of weeks after Election Day, during the canvass of elections, I received a call from the Michigan Secretary of State explaining to me that the results would not be certified unless I testified. During that time both my husband and I were diagnosed with COVID-19 and were quarantined. Nonetheless, to ensure the certification of the election, I had to report to my office, placing staff in harm's way, and testify.

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**Caven West**  
*Deputy City Clerk/Chief of Staff*

Upon the completion of my testimony, the harassment commenced. I received an insulting text message on my private cell phone, insults came by way of social media and through my inbox. The greatest threat came when, one morning while taking a walk to clear my mind, an unknown Caucasian male about 6'3" and 250 lbs approached me in my neighborhood and abruptly stated "I've been waiting for you at work and decided to come by your house. Why did you cheat?" and "Why did you allow Trump to lose? You are going to pay dearly for your actions in this election!" Mind you he approached me in a threatening manner, coming closer and closer and my only recourse was "I have COVID-19 and I will spit on you." Fortunately, a neighbor was driving by and asked me if I was ok. I retorted "No! This man is threatening me." At that point, my neighbor began blocking his movement with her car to ensure that I could safely get home. Later that evening I received a message on Facebook stating that he was going to blow up my block and that I was a chicken head and ugly in person. That's when I called the Detroit Police Department and explained this horrific encounter. As recently as February 2021, I was notified by the Detroit Police Department that my life was threatened and that the police would be patrolling my home for the next couple of weeks. My husband and I decided to simply leave town. Our government is elected by our citizens therefore voting is crucial to our democracy. Our job as Local Election Officials is essential as we are required to protect the act of voting. I ask that you consider it unlawful to harass, intimidate and/or threaten local election officials and election workers while performing our duties as election administrators. Thank you.

Janice M. Winfrey  
Detroit City Clerk