

Michael Gormany

Subject: FW: On Behalf of Secretary Merrill

From: Gilberti, Andrea <Andrea.Gilberti@ct.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 1:59 PM

To: Justin Elicker <JElicker@newhavenct.gov>

Subject: On Behalf of Secretary Merrill

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DENISE W. MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

Dear Chief Elected Official:

The pandemic that struck our nation and the world just six months ago has shaken the foundations of our economy, our society and our institutions. As a local elected official on the frontlines of this crisis, you know more than most nature of adapting to and overcoming the challenges that present themselves every day.

Each day we have all found ways to adapt, and working together we are beginning to overcome the disruption to daily life that has been a hallmark of this year. It has been in that spirit that my office has been working with local election officials and legislators across this state, and my colleagues across the country to ensure that we can carry out elections in 2020 that are safe, secure and accessible for all.

In the recent August primary elections, to provide an option for citizens who did not want to vote in person due to the pandemic, we were able to send absentee ballot applications to all eligible voters and delivered secure ballot drop boxes to every municipality in the state. To promote safe in person voting we provided PPE for all poll workers and committed to

providing \$500,000 in direct assistance to towns through Safe Polls grants. Local elections officials rose to the occasion and while operating in a time of pandemic and working through the aftermath of a tropical storm, democracy moved forward.

We learned an important lesson from the August primary. In a usual election year, the rate of voting by absentee ballot is about 6%. In August, that rate jumped to about 60%. The people of Connecticut have chosen this as their safe option for voting in time of pandemic.

We understand that this unprecedented expansion of absentee balloting does require more of local election officials in terms of time and resources. We will be providing direct assistance to municipalities to support the processing of absentee ballots. To support safe in person voting, our office will be providing PPE for all poll workers and Safe Polls grants on the order of \$1,000 per polling place. **Through these grants and other assistance, your municipality of New Haven can expect to receive a total of \$107517 for the 2020 election cycle.** Those funds should be to your fiscal office within the next two weeks.

Your municipality also has opportunities for more resources via our Secure Polls grants and Computer Replacement grants which do require certain commitments from you and your local election officials. In addition, our Election Support teams, organized on a regional basis, are holding weekly calls to which all local election officials are invited so that we can offer technical support and assistance from now through Election Day.

Please feel free to contact our office at any time. We look forward to continuing our work with your local elections team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Denise W. Merrill".

Denise W. Merrill