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November 6, 2018

By Email & Certified Mail

Denise Maddox
Probate Judge
Grady County Courthouse
250 North Broad Street, Box 1
Cairo, GA
39828gradypc@windstream.net

Re: Polling Place Change

Dear Ms. Maddox -

Thank you for speaking with me earlier this afternoon.

As you know, I contacted you after learning that the County closed the Cairo 5 Precinct (Agricenter) and moved voting to the First Baptist Church, impacting the ability of certain registered voters, a significant number of whom are Black, to participate in today's election. Based on our conversation, my understanding is that the Agricenter is being used by FEMA following the devastation that a recent storm caused to southwest Georgia, including Grady County. This decision was made on an "emergency basis." Accordingly, you indicated that you consulted the County Attorney and Secretary of State's Office about this change, including what notice needed to be provided to voters.

As a result, your office notified impacted voters by posting information about the change in the local organ, the Cairo Messenger, on October 24. *See attached.* I understand that this paper comes out weekly. The newspaper article indicates that voters in Cairo 5 would receive new precinct cards. And you informed me about an announcement that your office posted on Facebook about this change.

Based on conversations with local advocates and others, my understanding is that today, on Election Day, everyday community members took it upon themselves to direct voters—approximately 70—to the new site and have been there since 11:30 a.m. They have yet to see your office officially station someone at this site, though, when we spoke earlier today, you indicated that you would send someone from your office to direct voters to the new site for the rest of the day. They have relayed that many voters did not know or were not sure where First Baptist is, which I understand serves a predominately white congregation, until these community members directed them there. Indeed, many people indicated that they did not see the announcement in the



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Messenger or do not subscribe to that paper. Most significantly, no one indicated that they had received new precinct cards. Moreover, they contend that the signage (8" x 11") that has been placed on the door to the polling place was not conspicuous among the other signs announcing various FEMA and other information. *See attached*. There was no signage in the parking lot or driveway area.

In sum, we and others are concerned that the polling precinct change was not publicized widely enough, that your office did not directly reach out to impacted voters, and did not provide enough resources on Election Day to ensure that voters knew where to vote. Had the local community members not personally directed voters to the new site, an untold number of voters could have been impacted. This says nothing about those who likely were impacted before 11:30 a.m. when these community members began this outreach to their fellow voters.

We write to document this as we consider next steps. To the extent that this is a temporary relocation, we urge you to consider what additional and ample notice that you can provide to voters who are served by this precinct before the next election, which could be as soon as a December runoff.

Sincerely,

Leah C. Aden, Deputy Director of Litigation
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& EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.
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Enclosures