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May 21, 2019

Christy Riner, Elections' Supervisor
Jeff Davis County Board of Elections and Registration
14 Jeff Davis Street, Suite 107
Hazlehurst, Georgia 31539
JeffDavisElections@gmail.com

Via First-Class mail and E-mail

Re: Reopening the Hazlehurst Precinct in Jeff Davis County

Dear Ms. Christy Riner,

The ACLU of Georgia writes to respectfully request that the Jeff Davis Board of Elections reopen the poll site in the Hazlehurst Precinct, a predominantly black community, so that the entire Jeff Davis community may exercise their sacred and constitutional right to vote. Specifically, we ask that you work with the community to develop a polling place plan that can be approved as soon as possible before the November 2019 local elections, preferably by the next Board of Elections meeting.

The Hazlehurst Precinct, last operational in 2017, should be reopened so that voters, especially those without cars, have meaningful access to the ballot. Reopening the Hazlehurst polling place will increase access to the ballot as well as reduce congestion in other polling locations, improving the experience for both voters and poll workers in the remaining locations.

Although community members have been available to drive Hazlehurst voters without vehicles to the consolidated location at Southside Baptist Church, it is not sustainable for voters to rely indefinitely on outside groups to volunteer time to drive them to the polls.

Furthermore, forcing Hazlehurst voters (as well as other voters) to go outside of their precinct boundaries to cast their vote increases voter confusion. Locating the polling place outside of voters' precincts means that voters who reasonably assume that their polling place is within their precinct boundaries will be burdened with not knowing where to cast their vote on election day.

It is also important to note that a polling place may be moved outside of precinct boundaries only when "there is no suitable facility within the precinct which could be used as a polling place," but that is not the case here. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-265(e). Here, the Hazlehurst polling place is a suitable polling location which would "better serve the needs of the voters" than the

Southside Baptist Church, because it is located within the precinct's boundaries and voters were accustomed to voting at this location for years before it closed. *Id.*

Lastly, while it is true that reopening a polling place requires additional poll workers and some additional administrative tasks, elections officials cannot prevent people from voting just because higher voter turnout makes their job slightly more difficult. You cannot put a price on voting.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that the Jeff Davis Board of Elections work with the community to reopen the Hazlehurst polling place well in advance of the November 2019 elections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Aklima Khondoker', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Aklima Khondoker
Staff Attorney
ACLU of Georgia

cc: Keith Carter, County Administrator