

**Testimony of Derek Tisler, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law  
Colorado General Assembly, Committee on State, Civic, Military, & Veteran Affairs  
Apr. 7, 2022**

On behalf of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law,<sup>1</sup> I write to provide testimony on the alarming national trend of increased threats, harassment, and intimidation of election workers.

In the spring of 2021, the Brennan Center for Justice held interviews and hosted conversations with nearly three dozen election officials and over thirty experts about the rise in harassment and threats directed toward local election officials across the country following the 2020 election.<sup>2</sup> What we learned from these discussions was heartbreaking.

Several of the election workers we interviewed reported that their family members, including elderly parents and children, were harassed using crude language or threatened with violence. The voicemail of one elderly parent of an election official was filled to capacity with harassing and frightening messages. Multiple election officials told us that the persistent harassment forced them and their families to flee their homes and seek mental health treatment for their children. And when they reached out to law enforcement for help, the response was often insufficient to ensure the official, their staff, or other election workers felt safe.

Nearly a year later, the risks to election officials have not abated. A nationwide survey of local election officials that we released just a few weeks ago found that one in six election officials have experienced threats because of their job, and 77 percent say that they feel these threats have increased in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, these risks are beginning to take a toll: 30 percent of election officials surveyed said that they knew one or more election workers who have left the profession at least in part because of fear for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation.

While it is important to hold the perpetrators of this harassment and violence accountable after-the-fact, election officials also stressed the importance of proactive measures that can help election workers feel safe and secure now, as they prepare to administer primary and general elections in 2022. HB22-1273 does just that, by allowing election workers at the state, county, and local levels to file a request with a government entity to remove personal information from online records before that information can be used by bad actors to engage in or facilitate threats, harassment, and other disturbing behavior.

Threats against election workers who are doing their jobs are threats against democracy itself, and HB22-1273 is a helpful step forward in promoting a safe and secure democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law is a nonpartisan public policy and law institute that works to reform, revitalize, and defend our country's system of democracy and justice. I am a counsel in the Brennan Center's Democracy Program. My testimony does not purport to convey the views, if any, of the New York University School of Law.

<sup>2</sup> This culminated in a report entitled "Election Officials Under Attack: How to Protect Administrators and Safeguard Democracy," available at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/election-officials-under-attack>.

<sup>3</sup> Ruby Edlin and Turquoise Baker, "Poll of Local Election Officials Finds Safety Fears for Colleagues – and Themselves," Brennan Center for Justice, Mar. 10, 2022, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/poll-local-election-officials-finds-safety-fears-colleagues-and>.