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RELEASE: Ohio Democratic Party Statement on Status of Primary Election

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**OHIO DEMOCRATIC PARTY****For Immediate Release:**

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

CONTACT: Kirstin Alvanitakis, kirstin@ohiodems.org, 919.923.4055**OHIO DEMOCRATIC PARTY STATEMENT ON STATUS OF PRIMARY ELECTION**

COLUMBUS -- The Ohio Democratic Party released the following statement from Chairman David Pepper regarding the current status of Ohio's primary election:

"Given the chaos, confusion and mixed messages of the past 24 hours, it's clearly impossible for in-person voting to move forward today in Ohio. However, this primary election must move forward, and Ohio Democratic legislative leaders and Ohio Democrats must be part of the negotiations over how that happens.

"Yesterday's postponement does not create unchecked authority with the governor or secretary of state to run a new election. In fact, the dangerous precedent of postponing an election requires an immediate return to the approach provided by Ohio law. The most appropriate and lawful way to resolve this situation is for the Ohio General Assembly to act -- to use their legislative power and update Ohio's election statutes to address this emergency situation. House Democratic Leader Emilia Sykes, Senate Democratic Leader Kenny Yuko and their colleagues are ready and eager to get back to work and resolve this and other urgent issues.

"In the meantime, and if that does not occur, the Ohio Democratic Party continues to monitor legal developments and will litigate to defend voters' right to fully participate in our state's Democratic primary election.

"We are listening to the concerns of Democratic elected officials and voters about how this primary has been conducted to date and suggestions about how it will be resolved. We pledge to fight to ensure that every ballot that has been cast to this point will be secured and counted and that those who have not yet cast their ballot will not be disenfranchised.

"The Ohio Democratic Party strongly supports concluding the primary election earlier than June 2. Extending for that long is highly problematic for any number of reasons, and it is not at all clear that in-person voting will be possible on that date anyway."

In addition, the state party will advocate for the following:

- Implementing an expanded vote-by-mail process
- Ensuring absentee ballots are made available widely to those who have yet to vote
- Ensuring absentee ballots are counted and not tossed out because of minor technicalities

- Including pre-paid postage for absentee ballots to avoid a de facto poll tax
- Providing an option for secured curbside dropoff of absentee ballots and exploring other, safe options to accommodate voters that prefer in-person voting
- Complying with the Voting Rights Act and its provisions against discrimination
- Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure voters with disabilities are not disenfranchised because they cannot physically cast a paper ballot

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