



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

August 19, 2020

Contact Name: Sara Persechino, Michael O'Brien

Phone: (603) 271-3479, (603) 271-0515

Email: Sara.Persechino@leg.state.nh.us, mike.b.obrien@leg.state.nh.us

Governor Sununu and Secretary Gardner Continue to Issue Conflicting Absentee Voting Statements and Continue to Refuse to Issue Written Guidance

CONCORD – Yesterday, at his press conference, Governor Chris Sununu said anyone can take an absentee ballot, drop it off in dropboxes and that every town has them, which conflicts with Secretary Gardner saying that dropboxes must be individually staffed. In addition, in deflecting his responsibility to issue a public mask mandate for the entire state, Governor Sununu said “It’s on them” - stating any town or jurisdiction can mandate mask wearing in polling places, while Secretary Gardner’s office has said no town or city can require masks for elections. There is nothing in writing from either Governor Sununu or Secretary Gardner on either issue, both are critical to voting that is happening, right now.

Senate Election Law Chair Melanie Levesque and House Election Law Chair David Cote released the following statements in response:

“The state has a responsibility to voters to provide lawful, consistent, and timely information.” said **House Election Law Chair David Cote (D-Nashua)**. “The comments made by Governor Sununu at his press conference yesterday are inconsistent with information provided by the Secretary of State’s office to local election officials to date, which underscores how ineffective the Executive Branch has been in letting everyone know what the rules are for voting during the pandemic. Now that the governor has told people they can use dropboxes to deliver their absentee ballots, we urge the Secretary of State to issue clear, written guidance confirming that and addressing mask mandates for polling locations.”

“Clear and consistent communications regarding voting is important for every election but especially this year when we have so many new and moving parts amid the coronavirus pandemic. We have repeatedly asked Deputy Secretary of State David Scanlan for a joint House and Senate Election Law hearing where the Secretary of State can present their written plan and answer questions relating to this year’s modified election procedures. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State’s Office has refused to participate saying that they are too busy. There is nothing more important than educating voters,” said **Senate Election Law Chair Melanie Levesque (D-Brookline)**. “Granite Staters are already casting their ballots but the Executive Branch dragged their feet and less than a month before the election, local election officials have

yet to receive full guidance from the State about the additional measures they can put in place to ensure safe, secure elections during a pandemic.”

###