

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

Hope Solomon,)	
Challenger)	Administrative
)	Order #26-037
)	
v.)	Re: Challenge to Nominating
)	Petition Submitted for
)	Mayor
Rini Sampath,)	
Candidate.)	

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Introduction

This matter came before the District of Columbia Board of Elections (“the Board”) on April 17, 2026. It is a challenge (“the Challenge”) to the nominating petition submitted by Rini Sampath (“the Candidate”) to run for the office of Mayor in the June 16, 2026 Democratic Primary Election (“the Primary Election”). The challenge was filed by Hope Solomon (“the Challenger”), who is a registered voter in the District of Columbia, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.08 (o)(1). Chairman Gary Thompson and Board member Karyn Greenfield presided over the hearing. The Challenger, the Challenger’s counsel, J.P. Szymkowicz, the Candidate, the Candidate’s counsel Joseph Bishop-Henchman, and the Board’s General Counsel and Registrar were also present.

Background

On March 18, 2026, the Candidate submitted a nominating petition to appear on the ballot in the Democratic Primary Election contest for the office of Mayor (“the Petition”). The minimum number of signatures required to obtain ballot access for this office is 2,000 signatures of District of Columbia voters who are duly registered in the same party as the candidate. The Petition contained 3,868 signatures. Pursuant to Title 3, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations

(D.C.M.R.) § 1603.1, Marissa Corrente, the Board of Elections' Registrar of Voters ("the Registrar"), accepted 3,868 signatures for review.

On March 21, 2026, the Petition was posted for public inspection for 10 days, as required by law. On March 30, 2026, the Challenger filed the Challenge. The Candidate was duly notified of the Challenge.¹

The Challenge consisted of several narrative pages of argument followed by numerous BOE challenge form sheets that challenged, by page and line number, Petition signatures. The challenge form sheets questioned the validity of a total of 2079 signatures. Specifically, the signatures and affidavits were challenged pursuant to Title 3 D.C.M.R. § 1607.1 of the Board's regulations on the following grounds: the signer is not registered; the signer's voter registration was designated as inactive on the voter roll at the time the petition was signed; the signer, according to the Board's records, is not registered to vote at the address listed on the petition at the time the petition was signed; the signature is a duplicate of a valid signature; the petition does not include the address of the signer; the petition does not include the name of the signer where the signature is not sufficiently legible for identification; the petition sheet was not circulated by a qualified petition circulator; the circulator of the petition sheet failed to include all required information in the circulator affidavit; the signature is not made by the person whose signature it purports to be; the signature was not personally witnessed by the circulator; and the signer is not registered to vote in the same party as the candidate at the time the petition is signed.

While acknowledging that "petition challenges are adjudicated on a line-by-line basis," the narrative portion of the Challenge suggests petition defects that are not tethered to any particular page. For example, the Challenge suggests that one circulator, Damon Jones, is not a real person

¹ The standard notice of challenges includes a warning with respect to the right against self-incrimination.

and states that the Board should investigate him. It also claims that the Board should “invalidat[e] entire petition sheets” based on “irregularities affecting the integrity of the petition process” that “were inappropriate.” The narrative portion of the challenge asserts:

The petitions reflect patterns consistent with the involvement of improper or fraudulent circulators, including repetition of handwriting, irregular sequencing, and defective affidavits. Such conduct disqualifies the circulator and requires invalidation of all signatures collected by that individual.

The narrative also complained that the Candidate had an online posting that represented that she had collected 4,500 signatures even though “[i]n actuality, the candidate turned in around 4,000[.]” The narrative indicates that the inflated Petition signature number that was posted online “was designed to defraud the public and other candidates into believing that ... it would be a waste of time to challenge these signatures.”

Registrar’s Preliminary Determination

The Registrar’s initial report on the challenge found that a total of 1,628 of the 2,079 signature challenges were valid. Accordingly, the Registrar preliminarily determined the Petition contained 2,240 presumptively valid signatures, which is 240 signatures above the number required for ballot access. The report notes, however, that 246 signatures were found invalid for essentially the reason that the signatures did not match the signatures on file for the voters. The Registrar’s report also notes that signatures on petition sheets circulated by Damon Jones appeared to be in the same handwriting and in some instances included deceased voters. The report states that Damon Jones circulated a total of 26 sheets.²

April 15, and 16, 2026 Pre-Hearing Conference

² Based on the report findings, the parties were sent an email that warned the Candidate of her right against self-incrimination.

Pursuant to title 3 D.C.M.R. § 415.1, the Office of the General Counsel (“OGC”) convened a pre-hearing conference with both parties on April 15, 2026. In her findings report issued prior to the pre-hearing conference, the Registrar outlined her determinations with respect to the validity of each signature challenged and provided a key code explaining the notations she used to indicate the basis for upholding or denying each challenge.

Because the Registrar’s report issued just prior to the pre-hearing conference’s scheduled start time, the pre-hearing conference was continued to the next day to give the Challenger time to review the signature validity challenges.

At the next day’s continued proceedings, the Challenger complained that her due process rights had been violated because she did not have enough time to review and respond to the Registrar’s findings. She also claimed that, given an approximate challenge acceptance rate of 15-20% with respect to signatures collected by Tashima Barnes, Yannick Wondergem, Juliana Blanco Ramirez, Dominick Hill, Rini Sampath and Andre Galowicz (“additional six circulators”), all sheets circulated by those individuals should be rejected under *Williams*.³ Finally, while claiming that she had not had enough time to consider the challenge (especially given that April 16, 2026 was a holiday and so she did not have access to the Board’s offices to check the voter roll), the Challenger asserted that the Registrar incorrectly invalidated over 240 challenges. Her counsel identified three specific lines where he asserted the Registrar’s rejection of the challenge was clearly wrong as examples of the extent to which the Registrar’s findings were in error.

³ In *Williams v. D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics*, 804 A.2d 316 (D.C. 2002), the D.C. Court of Appeals essentially found that the Board had the discretion to reject all signatures gathered by certain circulators where there was “widespread obstruction and pollution of the nominating process” based on their sheets which were “replete with forgeries” and the Board expressed grave concerns about the veracity of the circulator affidavits.

The Candidate's counsel advised that the Candidate had information that would cure about 50 signatures that had been invalidated by the Registrar based on the challenges. That number included 10 signatures that were rejected because of a date issue with respect to a sheet circulated by Peter Durkin. The Candidate's counsel advised that he would be providing an affidavit from Mr. Durkin.

With respect to the Challenger's position, the Candidate's counsel argued that the allegations that all signatures gathered by the additional six circulators (not just the signatures gathered by Damon Jones) should not be entertained because the Challenger did not make that challenge by the deadline for asserting challenges and that it thus constitutes a new, impermissible argument. He noted that there is no precedent for rejecting the sheets of the additional six circulators. Finally, he took issue with the Challenger's due process argument by noting that the Challenger has had since March 21, 2026 to make her case and that is sufficient time.

As the parties were not able to resolve the matter, the case was set for a Board hearing on April 17, 2026. The OGC attorney assigned to the matter emailed the parties shortly after the April 16, 2026 proceeding, summarizing the arguments made (and therefore preserved) during the continued prehearing conference. She instructed them to provide by 5:00 pm that day any findings by the Registrar that they intended to dispute, by Petition page and line, so that the Registrar could review and update her findings as needed. She also provided written notice of the Board hearing set for April 17, 2026 and the credentials for accessing that hearing.

The Additional Submissions by the Parties

By the 5:00 pm deadline, counsel for the Candidate submitted a list by signer name, petition sheet, and line of 42 challenges that were upheld by the Registrar and information to cure or validate those signatures. The Challenger did not clearly specify by Petition page and line the

findings of the Registrar that she was disputing. Instead, she emailed a 17-plus page written brief (“the Brief”) that elaborates on her arguments for rejecting the Petition.

In her Brief, the Challenger contends that the Board should not accept the Candidate’s Petition for the reason that, according to the Challenger, it was “permeated by systemic irregularity, non-genuine signatures, and compromised circulator certifications.” Brief at p. 1. She noted that her challenge invalidated 41.7% of the Petition. *Id.* at p. 2. The Challenger’s brief asserts that the additional six circulators had a signature rejection rate of between 27.3% and 61.39% and that such a rate suggests fraud in the circulation of the Petition. *Id.* at p. 4. Citing *Williams*, the Brief argues:

[T]he Board is not required to parse such a petition line by line in an effort to salvage the Nominating Petition where the integrity of the petition process has been compromised—particularly through circulator misconduct. In such a case, the Board is authorized to reject the petition in its entirety. This rejection is the only result consistent with the statute, case law, and the Board’s obligation to safeguard the electoral process.

Id. at pp. 4-5; *see also id.* at p. 5 (where the Challenger argues that the “law does not require the Board to engage in a mechanical, signature-by-signature reconstruction of a petition where the process that produced those signatures is itself unreliable.”).

The Brief indicates that the Petition has an “extraordinary volume of suspected fraudulent activity attributable to multiple circulators” and that that volume “imposed a substantial analytical burden and revealed systemic irregularities that could not reasonably have been identified or adjudicated within the ordinary confines of the prehearing process.” *Id.* at p. 2. It suggests due process infirmities with the short time that she had to address the Registrar’s findings.

The Registrar's Final Determination

Reconsidering the three specific Registrar's findings that Ms. Solomon alleged were incorrect and the other specific line-by-line findings that were questioned by the Candidate's counsel, the Registrar issued an updated report just prior to the April 17, 2026 Board hearing. The updated report found that the margin of signatures in favor of the Candidate had increased to 278 signatures over the 2,000 needed for ballot access.

Specifically, the final report found that 589 challenges are valid because the signer is not registered to vote; 207 are valid because the signer is not registered to vote at the address listed on the petition at the time the Petition was signed; 32 are valid because the signer's voter registration was designated as inactive at the time the Petition was signed; 27 challenges are valid because the signature is a duplicate of a valid signature; 28 challenges are valid because the signature is not dated; 28 challenges are valid because the signature does not include the address of the signer; 106 challenges are valid because the Petition does not include the name of the signer where the signature is not sufficiently legible for identification; six challenges are valid because the circulator failed to complete all required circulator affidavit information; 247 challenges are valid because the signature is not made by the person whose signature it purports to be; 27 are valid because the signature was not personally witnessed by the circulator; and 269 challenges are valid because the signer is not registered to vote in the same party as the candidate at the time the petition was signed.

April 17, 2026 Board Hearing

At the Board hearing, the Registrar presented her updated finding that the Candidate's Petition has 2,278 signatures. The OGC attorney assigned to the matter explained the procedural history of the case and summarized the parties' positions.⁴

The Board heard from counsel Szymkowicz who reiterated arguments in the Brief. Counsel Bishop-Henchman again maintained that there was no precedent for discounting otherwise valid signatures based on the rate at which a circulator's other signatures were invalidated. Given that persons approached to sign petition often do not realize that, for example, they are no longer active voters, or registered as independents instead of Democrats, he indicated that the existence of signatures for individuals who turned out to not be registered D.C. voters or voters in the same party as the candidate did not prove anything nefarious. He also asserted that the Challenger's position that all signatures collected by the additional six circulators should be discounted was a new position, impermissibly asserted beyond the statutory ten-day period for challenges. Counsel Bishop-Henchman also asserted that the conduct of Damon Jones was not authorized by the campaign and that Jones was a rogue circulator. The Candidate's counsel also requested and was granted an opportunity for the Candidate to speak.

Candidate Sampath was sworn in and, in response to examination by her counsel, explained her campaign's efforts to follow the petition circulation laws and rules. She identified multiple documents that her campaign shared with and/or required circulators to execute that included instructions that signatures be obtained only from individuals who are active registered D.C. voters

⁴ The OGC attorney noted that, in light of the Registrar's initial findings that Jones' signatures indicated fraud, the Candidate had been reminded of her right against self-incrimination, that she had appeared at the first pre-hearing conference represented by counsel not barred in D.C., and that attorney Bishop-Henchman (who is a D.C. barred attorney) then stepped in. Attorney Bishop-Henchman moved that his predecessor counsel be admitted *pro hac vice* and the Chair granted that request.

in the Democratic party and to follow election laws and regulations. She advised that she personally inquired of signers whether they were D.C. registered voters and that many individuals that she approached signed her petition even though evidently their understanding of their status was mistaken. She emphasized that she would fully cooperate with the Board in any future enforcement action.

Opposing counsel was allowed to cross-examine the Candidate. In response to opposing counsel's questions, the Candidate added that she believed that senior staff in her campaign had taken BOE-offered training.

The Challenger also spoke and recounted her interaction with one of the Candidate's circulators. She described comments by that circulator that suggested that that individual was not adhering to the statutory requirements for gathering petition signatures.

During the proceeding, the Board Chair made clear that he did not believe that the Candidate engaged in any fraud. He noted that the fact that signatures are found by the registrar to be invalid does not lead to the conclusion that the signature gathering rules had not been followed and that many signatures may be invalid on a petition that was circulated in accordance with the law.

After hearing from the parties, the Chair made a motion, based on the Registrar's updated finding that the Petition contained 278 signatures above the number needed, that the challenge be rejected and that the candidate be granted ballot access. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Discussion

The election laws require that challengers, by the end of the ten-day challenge period, file a written challenge that "specif[ies] concisely the alleged defects in the petition." D.C. Official

Code §1-1001.08(o)(1). Unlike the statutory provisions for ballot measures, which require a parallel independent review of petition signatures by the agency, the statutory scheme for nominating petitions places the responsibility for questioning signatures on the challengers.

The Board is authorized pursuant to D.C. Official Code §1-1001.05(a)(14) to issue regulations for implementing election laws including regulations related to ballot access. The Board's regulations implementing the statutory nominating petition challenge requirements provide that a challenge must contain "[t]he name(s), if legible, sheet and line number(s) of any challenged signature(s) and the basis for the challenge(s).]" 3 D.C.M.R. § 410.3(c). In addition, the Board's regulations authorize the Registrar to reject a challenge as improperly filed where the challenge fails to "cite the alleged signature or circulator requirement defects, as set forth in the signature validity rules of this chapter, by line and page[.]" 3 D.C.M.R. §1606.2. As to the basis for challenges, the signature invalidity grounds encompass different types of fraud defects such as a claim that a signature is a forgery or that tampering has occurred based on the signer's address information being whited-out and written over.

These regulations serve in part to prevent challengers from shifting their burden of identifying enough signature defects to render a petition numerically insufficient onto the Registrar. They also enable the Registrar to make conclusive determinations as to the numerical sufficiency of challenges under tight statutory timeframes. Further, the regulations help ensure that candidates have notice of the number and type of challenges so that they can fairly rebut and possibly cure alleged defects.

Accordingly, we have declined to allow challengers to modify the signature validity grounds set forth in their filed challenge. *Ragas v. Jain*, No. 24-008 (issued 04/06/2024); *Graham v. DC Committee to Build a Better Restaurant Industry*, BOE Case No. 22-015 (issued

06/06/2022); *French v. Puente*, No. 08-05 (issued 07/24/2005). Fundamentally, such modifications would effectively allow challengers to circumvent the statutory deadline for making challenges. Challenges that are moving targets also likewise impede the Registrar’s ability to make a conclusive determination as to the number of challenges asserted and are unfair to the candidates.

The Challenge identified on challenge form sheets in compliance with the above requirements 2,079 allegedly invalid signatures. The Registrar relied on the challenge form sheets to evaluate the signatures that were specifically being challenged for purposes of her determination as to whether to accept the challenge and in determining whether the Petition contains enough valid signatures. Based on the challenges asserted with respect to individual, specifically identified (i.e., by Petition page and line), the Registrar found that there were not enough valid challenges to deny the candidate ballot access.

While acknowledging in the narrative portion of her challenge that challenges “are adjudicated on a line-by-line basis,” the Challenger argues that there are signatures in addition to those identified by page and line on the challenge form sheets that she submitted that the Board should not count. Her Brief asserts that *Williams* allows us to dispense with parsing a petition on a line-by-line basis. We address the Challenger’s claims in some depth because she is not the only challenger in this election cycle who has made sweeping allegations of fraud as a basis for rejecting a nominating petition.⁵

⁵ Notably, in *Shuler v. D.C. Board of Elections*, DCCA Case No. 26-AA-0238 (filed 04/02/2026) a candidate for Mayor in the Democratic Primary Election broadly alleged “fraud/forgeries” involving multiple circulators identified on the petitions of nine of her political rivals. Ms. Shuler generally did not specify the nature of the fraud/forgery conduct that supported her challenge and filed only a few dozen challenge sheet forms. Otherwise, Candidate Shuler indicated in a handwritten note on the cover sheet submitted in each of the nine cases that she wished all signatures or all signatures of circulators discounted for fraud/forgery and she provided additional pages of handwritten notes of names and undefined numbers that appear to identify circulators and either the petition sheets or number or signatures associated with those circulators. This approach, if it had been accepted, would have effectively shifted onto the Registrar the challenger’s job of reviewing over 15,000 signatures. Moreover, Candidate Shuler’s approach placed

A challenge to all the signatures gathered by a circulator for reasons of fraud must at a minimum identify each page that individual circulated and identify the signatures on such pages that demonstrate the alleged fraud.

The position that a challenger can challenge all of the signatures gathered by one circulator even where the challenge does not specify by petition page and line the signatures gathered by that circulator is contrary to the Board's regulations.⁶ Challengers cannot, as the Challenger suggests here, shift the burden of sifting through hundreds of petition sheets to find those circulated by a particular individual onto the Registrar. Such challenges, if made across multiple petitions, place an unsustainable burden on the agency. If challengers believe that fraud by a circulator warrants discounting all the signatures gathered by that individual, the challenger should identify by petition sheet and line each signature that that individual gathered so that the Registrar can readily determine that the signature was indeed gathered by the person of concern and tally the signatures at issue.

Further, and in conformance with the requirement that the challenger identify the signature invalidity rule that is the basis for discounting a specific signature, the challenger should identify, by petition page and line, the signatures that they believe are actually fraudulent and the invalidity rule that supports the conclusion of such fraud. For signatures that are not actually fraudulent but

the Registrar in the untenable position of reviewing all those signatures immediately in order to determine whether the challenges were numerically sufficient such that they should even be processed. The Registrar found, however, that the Shuler challenges did not comply with 3 D.C.M.R. §1606.2 and she rejected them. The Candidate then sought judicial review in the D.C. Court of Appeals of the rejection of her challenges. As of the issuance of this opinion, Candidate Shuler's appeal is pending.

⁶ In *Ragas v. Jain*, DC BOE 24-008 (issued April 26, 2024), the challenger provided challenge sheet forms identifying by petition sheet and line the specific signatures that she was challenging and why. She also filed as part of her challenge a narrative argument wherein she alleged that every sheet circulated by a particular individual should be struck and she provided a specific compelling example of fraud by that person. The challenger did not, however, on her challenge sheet forms seek to strike for fraud each signature collected by the circulator engaging in the alleged misconduct. The Registrar's report explained that she discounted signatures collected by the offending circulator that were found invalid based on the line-by-line signature challenges. As in *Ragas v. Jain*, the Registrar has discretion to ignore narrative portions of challenges for the reason that they do not on their face comply with the requirement of asserting challenges by petition sheet and line.

were gathered by the circulator who allegedly engaged in fraud, the challenge should indicate the petition sheets and pages where the actually fraudulent signatures appear and make clear that the challenger is asking that those otherwise valid signatures be discounted based on fraud committed by the circulator with respect to that other signature.

Nothing in *Williams* waives the requirement that challengers make out a numerically sufficient challenge by petition sheet and line. *Williams* does not say that a challenger can claim fraud by circulators sufficient to warrant discounting all signatures collected by said circulators without identifying which particular signatures, by line and page, are fraudulent and why they are fraudulent. On the contrary, the Board's underlying decision reveals that the challengers there asserted signature validity defects for individual signatures. *See Brizill, et al., v. Williams*, BOE Case No. 02-016 at p. 15, n. 7 (issued 07/29/2002) (discussing, for example, the Registrar's finding based on the challenge that 523 signers were not registered voters⁷). *Williams*, therefore, supports, at best, the conclusion that once there is a properly filed challenge that asserts by page and line the fraudulent signatures at issue, and there is in fact in the record sufficient evidence of widespread fraud, the Board has discretion to disregard all the signatures collected by the circulators of the sheets containing such fraud.

In this case, the Challenger, in the narrative portion of her challenge, has made sweeping general allegations of irregularities which she argues require disqualification of all signatures gathered by Damon Jones. She, however, does not list which of the 500-plus pages were circulated by Jones and she does not, in her narrative, identify each signature gathered by Jones that is

⁷ While the Board's decision does not elaborate on the basis for the "not registered voter" challenge, the circulators whose sheets were rejected by the Board in *Wilson* had signatures on petition sheets for fictional persons such as cartoon characters, celebrities known to reside outside the District, and other persons who facially could not be registered as voters in D.C. The defect of "not registered voter" would be one way to challenge those fraudulent entries.

allegedly fraudulent. In her Brief, the Challenger notes that she challenged, on a line-by-line basis, all of Jones' signatures except four. Putting aside that this approach does not conform to the requirements of our regulations, we do think that it unfairly burdens the Registrar and the Candidate with having to determine the scope of the challenge and scour the Petition for whatever signatures the Challenger might be attacking. Although it is not outcome determinative, we think it appropriate to note that we would be reluctant to reject the remaining four of Jones' signatures that were not challenged on a line-by-line basis.

Where, as here, the timely filed challenge vaguely asserts fraud and names only one circulator (Jones), the Challenger's efforts to expand the challenge to all signatures gathered by other circulators is impermissible.

As noted above, the statute requires the filing of challenges at the conclusion of the ten-day challenge period. The General Counsel is required "to promptly" provide the challenge to the candidate. 3 D.C.M.R. §1606.03. Once the challenge is served, the period for candidates to respond commences. Meanwhile, the Registrar is laboring under a short deadline to review numerous challenges. Given the statutory requirements and the timing for resolving ballot access issues, we have held that challengers cannot broaden the scope of their challenges beyond what they filed on the challenge deadline.

Here, it cannot reasonably be disputed that the Challenger seeks to expand her challenge well beyond what she timely filed. She names in her Brief the additional six circulators whose petition sheets she now challenges in their entirety. Because such an expansion of the challenge is contrary to law, not to mention unfair to the Candidate and the Registrar, we decline to consider any challenges other than those asserted by petition sheet and line.

While the burden on the Challenger was significant, that does not equate to the denial of a due process right.

As noted above, the election laws afford challengers only a ten-day window for making petition challenges, while at the same time setting minimum petition signature requirements in the thousands. There is no requirement in the statute or the regulations that the parties be provided with the Registrar's report at any particular time, if at all. Nor do the statute or regulations entitle parties to hyper-scrutinize the report that is produced.

That said, the Challenger was evidently aware of *Williams* and at some point prior to filing her challenge she should have known that there were many signatures on the Petition that did not match the signatures for the voter in the Board's file. We cannot fathom why she did not therefore make out a claim in the Challenge that all of the signatures of all or some of the six additional circulators should be struck, just as she did in the case of Jones. She points to no new post-challenge discovery that would have provided some basis for her failure to raise her argument with respect to the additional six circulators at the time that her challenge was due. While we do not intend to suggest that a post-challenge deadline discovery could open the door to new challenge arguments, we do think that there is no due process issue here where the Challenger does not appear to have been actually limited in her ability to make her case by whatever procedural hurdles she may have faced.

The "prime purpose of Congress formulating the District of Columbia Election law was to keep the franchise open to as many as possible." *Gollin v. D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics*, 359 A.2d 590, 595 (D.C. 1976). The Board interprets qualifications for candidacy "in an inclusive spirit." *Lawrence v. D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics*, 611 A.2d 529 (D.C. 1992).

Given the preference for ballot access, the fact that the Challenger had a limited ability to review the Registrar's finding of a 200-plus deficit in the number of valid challenges does not

translate into a due process violation. Even if it did, we cannot say that the remedy would be to deny the Candidate ballot access. The law requires that ballot access be granted where the Candidate has a petition with 2,000 valid signatures. Here, the Candidate had 278 signatures more than needed. We simply cannot deny ballot access because the Challenger did not have as robust an opportunity as she would have liked to try to contradict the Registrar's findings.⁸

The minimum number of signatures required to obtain ballot access for this office is 2,000 signatures of District voters who are duly registered in the same party as the candidate. The Petition initially contained a total of 3,868 presumptively valid signatures. While the Challenger filed challenges to a total of 2,079 signatures by petition sheet and line, only 1,604 of those challenges were valid. The Board upholds the finding of the Registrar that the petition contains 2,278 presumptively valid signatures. The Challenger did not produce evidence to rebut the reasons for invalidating at least 278 of her line-by-line challenges.

Conclusion

As a result of this challenge, the Board finds that the Petition contains 2,278 valid signatures – 278 signatures above the number required for ballot access. It is hereby:

ORDERED that challenge to the nominating petition of Rini Sampath for the office of Mayor in the Democratic Primary Election is hereby **REJECTED**.⁹

The Board issues this written order today, which memorializes its oral ruling rendered on April 17, 2026.

⁸ Along the due process lines, the Challenger complained about an on-line posting that allegedly misled readers as to the number of signatures that the Candidate collected and chilled challenge efforts. It appears, based on the Candidate's statements at the Board hearing, that the discrepancy between the posting and the signatures in fact included in the filed Petition was not intended to mislead. That said, there is likewise no Board remedy that we can envision for arguably misleading political speech.

⁹ Our finding granting ballot access is without prejudice to any petition fraud enforcement action that the Board's General Counsel may take at a later time.

Date: April 18, 2026



Gary Thompson
Chairman
Board of Elections