



May 19, 2023

Senator Gary Winfield
 Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Judiciary
 Connecticut General Assembly
 Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
 Hartford, CT 06106

Representative Steven Stafstrom
 Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Judiciary
 Connecticut General Assembly
 Legislative Office Building, Room 2502
 Hartford, CT 06106

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE CONNECTICUT VOTING RIGHTS ACT (S.B. 1226)

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and Judiciary Committee Members:

We write to express our strong support for [S.B. 1226](#), the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of Connecticut (“CTVRA”). This landmark legislation would address discrimination against voters of color in Connecticut and immediately position this state as a national leader on protecting the right to vote. For these reasons, the CTVRA is a top priority for the undersigned organizations.

In this historic session, we need Connecticut to stand up for equal, inclusive democracy.

Despite Connecticut’s progressive reputation, many discriminatory barriers to equal participation still exist in the state for voters of color and voters whose first language is not English, particularly at the local level. Until recently, Connecticut had some of the most restrictive voting laws in the nation. Connecticut voters still face limited access to absentee voting, no early voting (yet), and long lines at the polls—especially in Black and Latino neighborhoods.¹ And Connecticut lacks robust state-law protections against many forms of voting discrimination that remain a threat today.

The CTVRA will set a new standard for protecting the right to vote by:

- Launching a “preclearance” program that requires places with records of discrimination to prove that proposed voting changes will not harm voters of color before they can go into effect.
- Providing new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules in court.
- Expanding language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency.
- Creating strong protections against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.
- Establishing a central hub for election data and demographic information that will empower officials and community members to ensure accessible elections.

The CTVRA builds upon successful laws already passed in California, Washington, Oregon, Virginia, and New York—which enacted the [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York](#) in 2022. Similar bills are also under consideration in New Jersey and Maryland. The CTVRA will carry forward this momentum and become one of the most comprehensive state-level voting rights acts in the country.

Now is Connecticut’s time to lead. We encourage you to favorably report the CTVRA in Monday morning’s Judiciary Committee vote, and we stand ready to work with you to secure this victory for all Connecticut voters.

¹ See, e.g., NBC Connecticut, *Polling Location in Hartford Had Long Lines on Election Day* (Nov. 4, 2020), <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/polling-location-in-hartford-had-long-lines-on-election-day/2355523/>; Aakshi Chaba, *Long lines turn away voters*, Yale Daily News (Nov. 7, 2018), <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2018/11/07/long-lines-turn-away-voters/>; Jaden Edison, *Early voting is on the ballot in CT, a key issue for Black and Latino residents*, CT Mirror (Oct. 30, 2022), <https://ctmirror.org/2022/10/30/ct-early-voting-constitutional-amendment-black-latino-voters/>; Matt DeRienzo, *In Connecticut, Voters Face some of the Biggest Obstacles Outside the South*, Center for Public Integrity (Oct. 7, 2020), <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/elections/us-polling-places/connecticut-voters-face-some-of-the-biggest-obstacles-outside-the-south/>.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Connecticut
ADL Connecticut (Anti-Defamation League)
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Epsilon Omicron Omega Chapter
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Tau Xi Omega Chapter
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Theta Epsilon Omega Chapter
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Bridgeport Generation Now Votes
Campaign Legal Center
CoDE Columbia
Common Cause in Connecticut
Congregation Mishkan Israel
Collaborative Center for Justice
Connecticut AFL-CIO
Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans
Connecticut Chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Connecticut Citizen Action Group
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters
Connecticut NAACP State Conference
Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
CSEA SEIU Local 2001
CT Black Women (CTBW)
CT League of Conservation Voters
CT Shoreline Indivisible
CT Voters First
Democracy Women In Action (DWA Indivisible)
Elm City LITFest
FairVote Action
Greater New Haven NAACP
Hamden Progressive Action Network (HamPAN)
Hartford Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Hartford Votes-Hartford Vota Coalition
Hispanic Federation, Connecticut Office
IndivisibleCT4 (ICT4)
Indivisible Greenwich
Indivisible Orange (OCTI)
Indivisible Stamford
Island Worldwide
LatinoJustice PRLDEF

League of Women Voters of Connecticut
League of Women Voters of Hamden/North Haven
League of Women Voters of the East Shore
Make Voting Easy - CT
Mixed Chicks Sorority Incorporated
Moral Monday CT
NAACP Greater Waterbury Branch 2015B
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work, UConn School of Social Work
National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter
New Haven Peoples Center
New Haven Votes Coalition
PAN34
PoliticaCT
Progressive Women of Greater Hartford
ReSisters
Restore Democracy
Safe Vote CT
SEIU - CT State Council
SEIU 32BJ
Stand Up America
Strategic Advocacy Clinic, Yale Law School
Urban League of Greater Hartford
Urban League of Southern Connecticut
Voter Choice Connecticut
Western Connecticut Action Network
Windham Area Interfaith Ministry
Windham/Willimantic Branch NAACP
Yale Union Retirees Association