



May 15, 2023

Senator Cathy Osten  
 Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee  
 Connecticut General Assembly  
 Legislative Office Building, Room 2700  
 Hartford, CT 06106

Representative Toni E. Walker  
 Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee  
 Connecticut General Assembly  
 Legislative Office Building, Room 2702  
 Hartford, CT 06106

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

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Appropriations 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 civil and voting rights 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 today’s Appropriations Committee vote, and we stand ready to work with you to secure this victory for all Connecticut voters.

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<sup>1</sup> 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  
Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work, UConn School of Social Work  
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)  
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