

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
226 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.

July 3, 2020

**Re: The African American Mayors Association Future Leaders Fellows, Supports H.R. 4-
The Voting Rights Advancement Act**

Dear Senators Lindsay Graham and Dianne Feinstein:

We, the mayors of the African American Mayors Association, have done thorough research and analysis on the issues concerning voting rights across the country. Legislators in states that have a long track record of voter suppression often implement laws and engage in activities that make it harder for certain segments of the population, particularly minorities, to vote. This not only undermines our laws but compromises the integrity of our democracy.

We write to request your leadership and the Administration's efforts to direct legislators to combat voting roadblocks such as voter ID requirements, lack of language access, voter roll purges, polling place closures/consolidation, provisional ballot requirements, reduced early voting, reduced voting hours, poorly trained poll workers, and the creation of at-large voting offices to dilute minority vote.

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, voter ID laws are responsible for a 2-3 percentage point reduction in voter turnout, translating to tens of thousands of votes lost in a single state. Nearly 21 million U.S. citizens do not have government-issued photo identification. This in part is due to inaccessibility as a result of costs and restrictions associated with the ID process, posing a significant burden on people in lower-income and minority communities. For example, 25% of black voting-age citizens do not have photo ID compared to only 8% of white voting-age citizens. Further, the travel required is an obstacle for people with disabilities, the elderly, and people living in rural areas.

As such, we request the following measures found within the Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA) be analyzed and implemented at the national level: (i) Modernize the Voting Rights Act's formula to determine which states and localities have a pattern of discrimination; (ii) Ensure that last-minute voting changes do not adversely affect voters by requiring officials to publicly announce all voting changes at least 180 days before an election, and (iii) Expand the government's authority to send federal observers to any jurisdiction where there may be a substantial risk of discrimination at the polls on election day or during an early voting period.

These steps are crucial to ensuring that voting as a right is solidified while also being made more accessible and equitable.

Marginalized people in all states face barriers that impede their ability to vote. It is our hope that you mobilize legislators to provide support for the passage and implementation of the Voting Rights Advancement Act to ensure that the ability to vote is protected for all Americans. We, along with the 500 mayors representing the African American Mayors Association are willing and ready to support these efforts at all levels of government until we obtain the outcome needed to uplift affected communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

Mayor McKinley Price (Newport News, VA), President

Mayor Muriel Bowser (Washington, D.C.)

Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms (Atlanta, GA)

Mayor Steve Benjamin (Columbia, SC)

CC: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Chuck E. Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Karen Bass, Chair, Congressional Black Caucus
The Honorable Joyce Beaty, 1st Vice Chair, Congressional Black Caucus
The Honorable Brenda Lawrence, 2nd Vice Chair, Congressional Black Caucus
All U.S. Senators