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March 1, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to support H.R. 1, the For the People Act, to help restore democracy, end corruption and make it easier for Americans to vote. H.R. 1 would enact overdue, fundamental changes to strengthen our democracy for all Americans, which is so badly needed at this moment in history. Primary among these reforms are changes to reinvigorate the Voting Rights Act, which will reaffirm all Americans' right to vote. This legislation will end widespread voter suppression, increasingly common in recent years. We further urge your support for essential ethics reforms in H.R. 1 designed to end the outsized influence of big money in politics.

The fundamental right of every citizen to vote is a core constitutional principle of our democracy. But over the past decade, those rights have been eroded through a return to egregious practices of systemic voter disenfranchisement, especially targeting communities of color. Perhaps the biggest threat to voting rights protections came with the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* that eliminated the requirement for states and localities with a documented history of discrimination to receive preclearance for any changes to the Voting Rights Act (VRA). That decision opened the floodgates for growing restrictions on voter access. Since this decision was reached, over three dozen state legislatures introduced, passed and began enforcing measures that systematically disenfranchised eligible voters. Under the new legal framework, state and local officials have reduced voter access through inconsistent polling hours and inconvenient locations, poorly trained or untrained poll workers, inadequate or confusing voting material, and other means to reduce engagement with communities of color.

H.R. 1 restores VRA protections and tackles discrimination, deceptive practices, and intimidation designed to discourage and disenfranchise citizens who seek to exercise their voice in our democracy. It would modernize the preclearance formula; create a smooth process for review; establish training for poll workers; and ensure that states do not violate the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution in their redistricting processes. H.R. 1 simplifies voter registration and expands options for early and same-day voting for all voters. Access to voting should not be hampered based on race, color, national origin, disability status, or religion. H.R.1 is necessary to guarantee all protected classes of individuals have the right to vote and an easier path to the polls.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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The bill also reforms our nation's campaign finance laws, ethics and lobbying rules. H.R. 1 improves campaign finance disclosure to shine a bright light on the massive rise of dark money in our politics. It will help to restore the balance of power in our elections to struggling American families who deserve an equal say in their government. These and other changes will break the undue influence that large corporate special interests have over our politics. The bill strengthens conflict of interest rules and disclosure requirements for high ranking officials, would require presidents and vice presidents to disclose tax returns, and improves enforcement to deter ethics violations.

AFSCME members understand what's at stake in elections. They know that H.R.1 will herald in a new era of renewal and promise for our democracy as we continue our fight for racial and economic justice. AFSCME has long championed these goals led by our Memphis sanitation workers who pushed for it more than a half-century ago alongside Dr. Martin Luther King. The provisions in the bill will strengthen our ongoing engagement efforts such as voter registration, issue advocacy and education, and voter mobilization in advancing labor and civil rights nation-wide.

It is time to end big money dominance in politics and restore the full promise and protections of the Voting Rights Act. It is also vital that the Congress take this swift, meaningful and effective step to strengthen democracy within our political system. We urge you to vote to support H.R. 1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bailey K. Childers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bailey K. Childers
Director of Federal Government Affairs

BKC:KLS:hf