



Stephanie T. Bolden, Chair  
Eric Morrison, Vice Chair  
House Elections & Government Affairs Committee  
Delaware General Assembly  
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### **Testimony of Campaign Legal Center in Support of House Bill 444**

Campaign Legal Center (“CLC”) offers this testimony in strong support of House Bill 444, the Delaware John Lewis Voting Rights Act (“DEVRA”). CLC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing democracy through law. Through its extensive redistricting and voting rights work, CLC seeks to ensure fair representation at the federal, state, and local levels. CLC supported the enactment of state voting rights acts in Washington, Oregon, Virginia, New York, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Colorado, and it brought the first-ever lawsuit under the Washington Voting Rights Act in Yakima County, Washington, and under the Virginia Voting Rights Act in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

CLC strongly supports the adoption of state voting rights acts across the country because they ensure that every voter has an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice. Passage of the Delaware Voting Rights Act will allow Delawareans to vindicate their right to vote by building upon the model of the federal Voting Rights Act (“VRA”).

The federal VRA was one of the most transformative pieces of civil rights legislation ever passed. Section 2 of the federal VRA prohibits voting practices or procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership in a language minority group. The 1982 amendments to Section 2, which allowed litigants to establish a violation of the VRA without first proving discriminatory intent, created a “sea-change in descriptive representation” across the country.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Pitts, *The Voting Rights Act and the Era of Maintenance*, 59 ALA. L. REV. 903, 920–22 (2008).

Unfortunately, over the years, the protections established by the federal VRA have been steadily eroded. Since the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*,<sup>2</sup> jurisdictions with histories of discrimination have been able to implement restrictive voting policies, including dilutive election systems and redistricting maps, without federal oversight. In *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, the Court further weakened Section 2 of the federal VRA by making it even harder for voters to challenge discriminatory laws in court. And most recently, in *Louisiana v. Callais*,<sup>3</sup> the Court rendered Section 2's protections against racial vote dilution functionally inoperable.

Beyond the courts, Congress has also failed to shore up federal voting rights protections, and the current presidential administration is openly hostile to voting rights, as evidenced by its dismantling of the voting rights enforcement arm of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. These developments have left millions of voters vulnerable to discrimination and suppression. In response to this national landscape, states must step in and ensure their voters have the legal tools necessary to defend their freedom to vote.

Momentum for state VRAs is growing. California (2002), Washington (2018), Oregon (2019), Virginia (2021), New York (2022), Connecticut (2023), Minnesota (2024), Colorado (2025), and Maryland (2026) have already enacted such protections, while states like New Jersey, Rhode Island, Illinois, Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, and Alabama are working to follow suit. Delaware should take advantage of this opportunity and join these other states in ensuring all of its citizens have equal access to the democratic process.

The DEVRA will be a critical path forward to protecting every voter's right to an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice. By enacting this legislation, Delaware can become a national leader and restore critical parts of the protections that have been shamefully stolen from voters, while also making enforcement of those protections more efficient and less costly.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Marisa Wright*

Marisa Wright, Legal Fellow

Lata Nott, Director, Voting Rights Policy

Aseem Mulji, Senior Legal Counsel

CAMPAIGN LEGAL CENTER

1101 14th St. NW, Suite 400

Washington, DC 20005

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<sup>2</sup> 570 U.S. 529 (2013).

<sup>3</sup> No. 24-109, 2026 WL 1153054 (2026).