



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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LANSING

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Testimony to Michigan Senate Elections and Ethics Committee
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Thank you for having me. The Michigan Voting Rights Act is coming at a very urgent and important moment in our state's history.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision will go down in history as one of the most shameful and discriminatory actions taken by the United States Supreme Court in the 21st century.

The decision is an insult to those in this country who, not that long ago, were beaten, jailed, and killed in pursuit of equality and the right to vote. It is also a deliberate, and years-long attempt to resurrect Jim Crow and make racial discrimination legal again.

In the aftermath of the Callais decision, that's exactly what we're seeing. Feckless politicians across the country jumped at the chance to redraw district lines and strip away power from Black voters in Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

It's tempting to think that we're better protected here in Michigan. But that assumption is dangerous and naive.

We have seen communities of color in our state be targeted by groups attempting to unjustly challenge the voter registrations of eligible citizens. We have seen communities illegally turn over their voting machines to election deniers. And these actions were done – without the Secretary of State being notified by keeping voters in the dark. That is unacceptable. That is not right.

Besides that, every single county or municipal legislative district in our state that is not covered by the independent redistricting commission is more at risk today because of the Callais decision.

But the Michigan Voting Rights Act wouldn't just protect Black and Brown voters. Its legal protections extend to a wide range of voters from discrimination – including voters with disabilities, or voters who need assistance to vote.

We have made progress making voting sites ADA accessible in Michigan, but there is still more work to be done. The MVRA would enhance protections for those voters and make voting safer and more accessible.

This includes protections for citizens whose first language isn't English. For years – people have come from all over the world to pursue the American dream here in Michigan. While many of these people speak English well, they may not read English as well as they read in their native languages. These citizens have the right to participate in our democracy as well.

By passing the Michigan Voting Rights Act, we will ensure that Michigan voters get fair representation, access to the polls, and are protected from voter suppression and discrimination.

We have support from a growing coalition of lawmakers, faith leaders, community organizations, election clerks, and people from across our state who care about our democracy and our right to representation.

It's no coincidence that states are scrambling to redraw their district lines. They're trying to rig the system in a way that keeps power consolidated in the hands of the few. People have made it clear they will gladly screw over the rest of us to further enrich themselves.

We are calling on lawmakers in this body to pass the Michigan Voting Rights Act. And we are calling on everyone who cares about our state, our country, and our most fundamental freedoms to join in this fight.

In doing so, Michigan can lay down the blueprint and show other states, communities, and voters how to fight back and win. The time to act is now – our rights depend on it.