

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Senator John J Flanagan
Senate Majority Leader
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Minority Leader
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Senator Jeffrey D. Klein
Senate Co-Leader
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Speaker Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of Assembly
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12248

December 15, 2017

Dear Hon. Messrs. Cuomo, Flanagan, Heastie, and Klein and Ms. Stewart-Cousins:

We, the undersigned, urge you to commit to giving all eligible New Yorkers the freedom to vote by including Early Voting funding and legislation in the 2018-19 state budget, as the first step towards modernizing elections in New York State.

It is important for all New Yorkers that our voting system works well, yet our state has consistently failed to adopt any of the common-sense steps that would safeguard our elections without shutting eligible citizens out of the voting process. There are 37 other states including Texas, Ohio, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Oklahoma that have adopted Early Voting laws to enable more citizens to have their voices heard and improve election administration. It is unfortunate that New York is not among them. Even worse, New York's failure to adopt simple reform measures has been cited as an excuse when other states attempt to cut back or repeal voting rights in an effort to deny citizens the opportunity to vote. There is much to be done to ensure that New York's election laws help foster a truly inclusive and representative democracy. Establishing and funding an Early Voting process in New York is an important first step that can be accomplished during this budget cycle, and we look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

Hard working New Yorkers should not need to choose between their jobs and voting. Early Voting in New York would finally give voters who are seniors, disabled, in school, working, or parents taking care of their families, a chance to get to their polling location and cast their ballots when it is convenient for them – not just on one day. Early Voting would also be an important addition to New York's disaster preparedness, helping to avoid the confusion and chaos that can result from extreme weather events, such as Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene, that may occur close to Election Day. Early Voting has shown to be popular with voters across the political spectrum as well as both Republican and Democratic election administrators.

Now more than ever, we must recognize that voting rights are civil rights. Generations of brave Americans fought and died to ensure that we have the opportunity to vote, but New York's failure to pass simple solutions for fair and secure elections poses a serious threat to freedoms that we depend on and work so hard to protect.

Our state must encourage voting, rather than discourage it, by working to reform outdated voting laws as so many other states have successfully done. With your leadership, we can set up an Early Voting system that ensures the accuracy of New York's elections and the health of our democracy.

Sincerely,

Common Cause New York
Citizen Action of New York
SEIU 32BJ
New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)
CWA District 1
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union
Transport Workers Union Local 100
The NAACP New York State Conference
The Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, CUNY
Brooklyn NAACP
New York State Council of Churches
The New York Immigration Coalition
Citizens Union
Public Citizen
Make the Road NY
New York Civic Engagement Table
League of Women Voters of New York State
The Brennan Center for Justice
The Gathering for Justice / Justice League NYC
OCA-NY Asian Pacific American Advocates
National Action Network
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
Long Island Civic Engagement Table
MinKwon Center for Community Action
National Institute for Reproductive Health
CAAAY Organizing Asian Communities
New York Civil Liberties Union
Community Voices Heard
United Neighborhood Houses of New York
Partnership for the Public Good
FPWA
Push Buffalo
Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts
New York Communities for Change
Metro Justice of Rochester
MPower Change

And dozens of grassroots community groups from across the state as a part of the Let NY Vote (formerly Easy Elections NY) Coalition