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July 6, 2015

The Honorable Marty Block  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 95814  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0058

**RE: Senate Bill 589 - Voter Registration: Individuals with Disabilities and Conservatees - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Block,

On behalf of California Common Cause and our members, I am writing with a letter of support for SB 589, which strengthens voting rights protections for individuals with disabilities and conservatees.

In order to achieve a vibrant, healthy, fair, and just democracy, participation in the democratic process should be accessible to all citizens who desire to vote. And a democracy for the people, and by the people, of California ought to reflect the myriad interests that make up this incredibly diverse and populous state. We are failing, and the democratic process is failing, when citizens with disabilities are routinely barred from voting in elections.

Under current law, conservatees are ineligible to register to vote if a court determines they are not capable of completing an affidavit of voter registration. Thus, courts often end up preventing conservatees from participating in the democratic process—even when they have a desire to do so. AB 1311 (Bradford), which permitted conservatees to complete this affidavit of registration with a signature marking, cross, or stamp, or to receive assistance signing the affidavit, was a step in the right direction.

AB 589 is the next step to breaking down these harmful barriers in the democratic process. AB 589 establishes the presumption that persons with disabilities, regardless of conservatee status, are competent to vote, and it prohibits disqualifying them from voting unless a court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person cannot communicate a desire to participate in the voting process. We believe AB 589 is a marked improvement in protecting the voting rights of citizens with disabilities or who are conservatees. This bill brings California one step closer to achieving a more inclusive and accountable democracy.

For these reasons, California Common Cause strongly supports SB 598, and we look forward to working with your office. Please contact me at [nheidorn@commoncause.org](mailto:nheidorn@commoncause.org) or (916) 520-4070 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Nicolas Heidorn  
Policy and Legislative Counsel