



Connecticut

Holding Power Accountable

Testimony of Teran Loeppke

IN SUPPORT of Raised S.B. No. 1226: AN ACT CONCERNING STATE VOTING RIGHTS IN RECOGNITION OF JOHN R. LEWIS

March 20, 2023

Dear Senator Mae Flexer (Co-Chair), Representative Matt Blumenthal (Co-Chair), Ranking members Senator Rob Sampson and Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco and esteemed members of the Government Administration & Elections (GAE) Committee:

Connecticut needs our own state-level Voting Rights Act because federal courts have drastically weakened the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. As you know, it was enacted to combat a wide range of barriers and burdens that exclude voters of color from the political process.

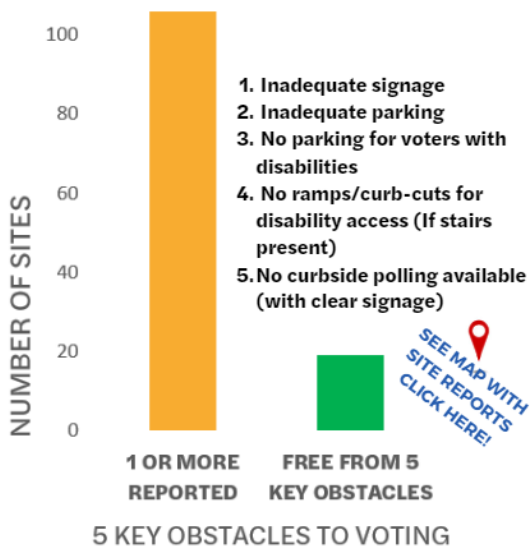
Black and brown voters in Connecticut face longstanding and evolving threats to the franchise—and S.B. No. 1226, AN ACT CONCERNING STATE VOTING RIGHTS IN RECOGNITION OF JOHN R. LEWIS will provide tools to efficiently root out racial discrimination in voting.

To this day, Black, brown voters in Connecticut routinely encounter long lines and other obstacles when voting. For example in the 2022 primary and general elections, nonpartisan Election Protection volunteers monitored outside polling places with both the state’s highest numbers of total voters and also of Black, brown and other voters of color. Obstacles to voting they found disproportionately impact voters of color—and the cumulative impact of these obstacles can and should be called voter suppression, be they intentional or unintentional.

Of the 147 polling places monitored on General Election Day only 19 were free from 5 key obstacles to voting: inadequate signage; inadequate parking; no parking for voters with disabilities; no ramps/curb-cuts for disability access (if stairs were present); or no curbside polling available (with clear signage).

Of the 70 polling places monitored On Primary Day, August 9th, 2022, 90% of polling sites monitored did NOT have curbside polling available with clear signage. 37% of polling sites had either NO parking for persons with physical disabilities, or inadequate parking in general, or both. 26% of the polling sites had inadequate signage identifying the location as a polling place.

General Election Day November 8th, 2022:



OUR FOCUS → On Primary Election Day, Aug. 9th, 2022:

- 90% of polling sites monitored did NOT have curbside polling available with clear signage
- 37% of polling sites had either NO disabled parking, or inadequate parking in general, or both
- 26% of the polling sites had inadequate signage identifying the location as a polling place

← Roving and Traditional Poll Monitors reported on 70 of the highest BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other people of color) voter population polling sites

Under the federal Voting Rights Act, only 10 Connecticut towns are required to have language assistance, but voters in other towns also need translation. SB 1226 will expand **language assistance** for voters with limited English proficiency.

SB 1226 will provide Black, brown and other voters of color—as well as organizations that represent or serve Black, brown or other voters of color—with a private right of action against municipalities that adopt policies or practices that result in racist voter suppression or dilute the voting strength of Black, brown or other voters of color.

Voters across the country are facing the greatest assaults on voting rights since Jim Crow. The U.S. Supreme Court has turned its back on the federal Voting Rights Act. With too many states moving the wrong direction on voting rights, Connecticut can and should lead the way forward.

The legislature must pass S.B. 1226, the Connecticut Voting Rights Act, to codify state-level protections for voting rights that are under attack nationwide.

Respectfully submitted,

Teran Loeppeke, Common Cause in Connecticut