

September 9th, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

At the beginning of this legislative session, few could have anticipated the situation our state now faces with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to devastate our communities, weaken our economy and threaten our democratic processes. **Now that the State Legislature has passed Automatic Voter Registration (AVR), we are calling on you to sign it in order to protect the integrity of New York's elections well into the future.**

Amid the backdrop of COVID-19, the rate of new voter registrations has plummeted compared to the last presidential election year. According to New York State's voter registration database, from March through June of 2020, 104,691 new voters were registered in New York State. That represents a 61 percent drop from the same period four years ago, when 269,560 were added to the voter rolls. That's because the places people register – the Department of Motor Vehicles, public libraries, outdoor festivals and the like – have been shuttered.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing weaknesses in the way we register voters, and AVR must be part of strengthening this fundamental right for all New Yorkers. This bill allows eligible voters to become automatically registered when they interact with government agencies, provided they do not opt out. It would also update registered voters' addresses if they have moved. It would then securely transmit the voter's registration information from those agencies to the state Board of Elections.

Roughly, one million eligible voters in New York are not registered, while hundreds of thousands more are registered under out of date addresses and names. AVR will dramatically improve the completeness and accuracy of registration records, while also modernizing government systems and making them more efficient. Had this law been in effect in 2020, New Yorkers could have registered to vote while filing for unemployment benefits with the Department of Labor.

The time has come to transform New York's ossified voter registration system into something far better. By signing this historic legislation, you will be adding New York to the growing list of

17 states and the District of Columbia that have AVR, advancing the security and accuracy of New York's voter rolls, while greatly expanding voter registration in the Empire State.

Thank you for your consideration of this crucial piece of legislation and we remain ready to support your efforts to implement this groundbreaking reform.

Sincerely,

AIM Independent Living Center
Common Cause New York
Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance
Generation Citizen
Center for Popular Democracy
Democracy Matters
Local Progress NY
League of Women Voters of New York State
Make the Road New York
Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts
Upper West Side Action
Stand Up America
New York Immigration Coalition
Citizens Union of the City of New York
Interfaith Impact of New York State
Public Citizen
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund
ADL NY/NJ (Anti-Defamation League)
Citizen Action of New York
Brooklyn Voters Alliance
Generation Vote
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center For Disability Rights
New York Association on Independent Living
National Council of Jewish Women New York
New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.
Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.
Catskill Center for Independence
Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc.
Rockland Independent Living Center, Inc. dba BRIDGES
Regional Center for Independent Living
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU
SEIU 32BJ
Democrats for Education Reform - New York Chapter
YMCA of Greater New York
Southern Tier Independence Center
New York Democratic Lawyers Council
Disability Rights New York
New American Leaders Action Fund
Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley, Inc.

The New York Civic Engagement Table
Community Votes
Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College
Elmont Cultural Center (ECC)
Communications Workers of America, District 1
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law
Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
Partnership for the Public Good (PPG Buffalo)
Muslim American Society of New York (MAS NY)
New York Muslims United for Civic Engagement (NYMUCE)