

To the members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives:

The undersigned organizations are voting rights advocates united by our desire for secure and accessible elections. We support common sense measures to improve election security while protecting each eligible voter's right to cast a ballot. However, recent efforts to impose additional paperwork requirements on Pennsylvania voters through voter ID threaten to make Pennsylvania's elections less accessible and has the potential to disenfranchise voters if implemented without proper safeguards. This proposal comes at a time when Pennsylvania voters—and election officials—are burdened by inconsistent and confusing election rules which complicate voting in the Commonwealth and must be urgently addressed. **We write to urge you to oppose HB 771.**

In the 2024 general election, we witnessed significant difficulties with election administration that inconvenienced and potentially disenfranchised thousands of Pennsylvania voters, including:

- **Long lines at polling places.** Many voters, particularly on college campuses, waited in long lines because of widespread problems with voter registrations that needed to be addressed. At some locations, the wait exceeded two hours, including a polling place at Lehigh University, where students waited up to six hours to vote. Added administrative burdens under this bill would make those lines even longer.
- **Insufficient early voting rules.** In the absence of true early voting, counties that wanted to provide more on-demand mail ballots used satellite elections offices, yet struggled to handle the voter turnout. Long lines at the Doylestown SEO led to much confusion and controversy and resulted in a court order to meet the demand.¹
- **Inconsistent mail voting rules.** In recent years Pennsylvania courts have been flooded with election litigation due to unclear and inconsistent rules that have disenfranchised thousands of voters for minor errors and caused much confusion and extra work for counties.

If passed, HB 771 bill will contribute to longer lines and voter confusion and has the potential to disenfranchise many Pennsylvania voters, unless these issues are addressed through the passage of reforms to reduce lines and make voting easier, including true early voting and same-day voter registration.

Absent these reforms, HB 771 will impose additional burdens on already under-resourced elections offices. New voter paperwork requirements will result in longer lines, including at student voting locations across the Commonwealth, and may deter voters who believe they lack appropriate paperwork from voting. The longer lines and implementation challenges that would be caused by this legislation would result in voters being disenfranchised unless substantial resources are allocated to provide voter education and election worker training about any new requirement.

¹ Nell, E. Judge orders Bucks County to extend mail ballot deadline following Trump legal challenge. (Oct 30, 2024). <https://why.org/articles/bucks-county-pennsylvania-mail-ballots-trump-legal-challenge/>

Experience has shown that making it harder to vote disenfranchises voters of color, older voters, and voters with disabilities. In two states with recently implemented voter identification laws, Black and Latino voters were disproportionately more likely to lack the proper ID to vote.² A 2022 study of the impacts of election administration policies on turnout among voters with disabilities found a direct and disparate effect.³

Voter identification laws do not address an actual problem. In-person voter impersonation is exceedingly rare; in fact, multiple investigations of voter impersonation at polling places have found the evidence to be “strikingly sparse” with fewer than .000002 percent of ballots cast of millions of votes in thousands of elections even alleging voter impersonation, much less confirming it.⁴ In fact, over the course of 42 years, only 3 instances of in-person voter impersonation resulted in a criminal conviction.⁵ The rules that exist under current law, including the checks required for first-time voters, adequately address this issue.

In summary, voter identification laws create additional obstacles between voters and the ballot box and increase the administrative burden on election officials and other agencies, all without having an actual problem to solve. The General Assembly should focus on making it easier for voters to cast a ballot, not harder. Adopting early voting and same day voter registration and providing more state funding for elections would do much more than increasing the burdens on Pennsylvania’s voters to show identification when it’s not necessary.

Sincerely, the following organizations:

Common Cause Pennsylvania
All Voting is Local Action
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
New Pennsylvania Project
New Pennsylvania Project Education Fund
Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance
Pennsylvania Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates
PA Stands Up
Black Political Empowerment Project
Project 26 Pennsylvania
1Hood Power
Make the Road PA

² The Brennan Center. (2022). *The Impact of Voter Suppression on Communities of Color*.

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/impact-voter-suppression-communities-color>

³ Kuhlmann, R. and Lewis, D. (2022) *Making the Vote (In)Accessible: Election Administration Laws and Turnout Among People with Disabilities*. Taylor & Francis Online: Politics, Groups, and Identities.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21565503.2022.2137049>

⁴ United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. *New State Voting Laws: Barriers to the Ballot?* (2011) (Testimony of Professor Justin Levitt). <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/11-9-8LevittTestimony.pdf>

⁵ Heritage Foundation. Election Fraud Map. Accessed March 4, 2025:

<https://electionfraud.heritage.org/search?state=pa>

NextGen America
Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition
One Pennsylvania
SEIU PA State Council
Council on American-Islamic Relations - Philadelphia
Rural Organizing
Keystone Progress
POWER Interfaith
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Pennsylvania Policy Center