

March 13, 2021

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp
Governor of Georgia
203 Capitol Place SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

RE: Georgia's Election Laws Should Ensure Every Eligible Citizen
Has Equitable Access to Exercise Their Constitutional Right to Vote

Dear Governor Kemp,

We are a group of more than 400 Clergy, Faith Leaders, and Laity from Atlanta and across Georgia—Black and White together—who believe that voting is a sacred right that is at the heart of our democracy. We know thousands more like-minded Georgians who share our concerns. We laud the work that you, Lt. Governor Duncan, and Secretary of State Raffensperger did to facilitate voting during the 2020 election cycle, including launching an absentee ballot request portal and permitting counties to install a network of secure drop boxes throughout Georgia, which improved ballot security and allowed more Georgians than ever before to participate in the election process. As you know, no-excuse absentee voting and automatic voter registration are features of our election system that are very popular with the vast majority of Georgians and are a credit to the work that you and others have done to improve voting access in our state.

We are writing to you today because we are gravely concerned that many of the measures found in HB 531, SB 241 and other bills moving through the Georgia Legislature threaten to erase many of the voting rights that so many have fought so hard to secure. We, therefore, call on you to use your moral and political authority to defend our sacred and constitutional right to vote, and to veto any bill that will make it more difficult for *any* eligible Georgians to vote by whichever method they prefer.

Among the most disturbing measures in the proposed voting legislation are:

- Criminalizing “line warming”—offering a drink of water or bite to eat is *never* a crime;
- Prohibiting the use of facilities such as churches and stadiums for early voting;
- Creating confusing and unenforceable rules about who can vote absentee;
- Requiring copies of certain IDs, but not others, to apply for and vote by absentee ballot;
- Limiting the number of and access to secure drop-boxes;
- Rejecting provisional ballots cast in wrong precincts by otherwise eligible voters;
- Restricting Sunday & Saturday voting options during early voting;
- Prohibiting organizations—such as *Souls to the Polls*—from providing rides to the polls;
- Prohibiting use of non-partisan grants to offset the cost of large turnout elections; and,
- Transferring effective control of the State Election Board—and the election process—away from the Secretary of State and to the Legislature.

If these measures become law, they will severely compromise voting equity in Georgia and risk undermining the integrity of all future elections. They will certainly damage our state's reputation as a good place to do business. Yet, the bills that have crossed over do nothing to address some of the well-documented short-comings of the system, such as the difficulties many hearing- or visually impaired persons face with in-person voting. Instead, these bills focus on measures that risk great harm to Georgia and to voters of every color, creed, or political persuasion—particularly senior, rural, and poorer voters.

Many of us have worked doggedly for decades to protect and promote our sacred right to vote, remembering how the government once actively blocked certain citizens from voting. Renewed threats to our voting rights have united us in common cause to hold those in power accountable in the courts and at the polls. All of us—Black, White, Brown, Christian, Jew, and Muslim—are deeply committed to making the world a better place for all God's people. To do all we can to make our society and our laws more just. **Rather than fixate on the brokenness of our past and point fingers at each other, we are moved by faith to fix what is broken today—to redeem ourselves in ways that truly bring us closer to liberty and justice for all!** We know that no one group can save themselves by destroying another. Our destinies are intertwined, and our responsibilities are, too.

Governor Kemp, we invite you to lead the way—grounded by the wisdom of your own faith tradition, calling on our better angels—and work with us toward greater fairness, equity, and inclusion that benefits everyone. We will not always agree, but we can still seek the shared values that make working together possible and fulfill the dream of a celebrated son of Georgia: The creation of The Beloved Community.

Respectfully,

Bishop Carl McRae	Rev. Darryl Winston
Rev. Keith Jamal Hammond	Rev. Wendy Torres
Rev. T. Renee Crutcher	Pastor Adrian Chester
Rev. Dr. William Flippin, Sr.	Dr. Debbie Grant-Ireland
Rev. Jared Sawyer	Rev. Fred Taylor
Bishop Ralph Lewis	Rev. Alonia Jones
Rev. Timothy Flemming, Sr.	Reggie Joiner
Rev. Dr. Scott K. Cox	Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown
Rev. Dave Spence	Dr. Jon Gunnemann
Rev. Barbara Dickason	Rev. Cameron A. Pennybacker
Rev. Dr. James Brewer-Calvert	Dr. William Wyatt Holland
Rev. Luther E. Smith, Jr.	Evelyn Brewer