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Prepared Remarks Opposing HB 531

Anti-Voter Suppression Rally
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10AM Capitol Steps
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During the 2020 general election in Georgia, five million people cast their ballots and made their voices heard. But we have over 7.5 million registered voters in Georgia which means that even in the record turnout general election, around 2.5 million registered Georgians, or one out of three, did not make their voices heard.

The story of the 2.5 million Georgians who did not cast ballots in the general election spans every region of our state but repeatedly goes untold.

It is the story of Georgians who couldn't take time off from work to vote.

It's the story of Georgians who live too far away from the polls, particularly in the Black Belt region.

It's the story of Georgians who were entitled to provisional ballots at their polling location but denied access.

These are the stories that HB 531 ignores. The story of millions of Georgians whose silence is not willful--but the result of a system that continues to fail them.

What these Georgians require is expanded access to the ballot, and that should be the foremost goal of this legislature.

Every eligible Georgian who wants to cast a ballot, to make their voice heard should be able to do so with ease.

But HB 531 does not reflect that goal.

At every turn, the bill erects new hurdles to access and guts much of Georgia's existing voting infrastructure. It seeks only to widen that silence of 2.5 million voters by drastic increments.

20. That's the number of days that HB 531 would delay the mailing of absentee ballots to Georgians who are seniors and physically disabled.

Over 20,000. During the general election and runoff, that's the number of Georgians, disproportionately Black, who voted in-person by provisional ballot -- ballots that HB 531 tries to throw out.

A quarter of a million. That's how many Georgians voted on early voting days that HB 531 would cut.

Almost 4 million. That's the number of absentee ballots cast last year in Georgia -- applications and ballots that would carry sensitive personal information if HB 531 were to pass.

And over 30 million. That's how many dollars local elections offices across our state would lose in grant funding as a result of HB 531.

One last number: **2.** That's the number of hours, generously speaking, that members of this legislature and the public had to review HB 531, now a 66-page bill, after it was introduced and before it was heard in committee.

That the bill is riddled with poorly-drafted, frequently redundant provisions lacking in any evidentiary basis was no surprise.

This wholesale overhaul of Georgia elections was introduced as hastily as it was written and does nothing to serve the 2.5 million Georgians whose voices went unheard last cycle.

So, we have to ask: if HB 531 is not for the voters, then who is it for?

Is it for a twice-impeached president who peddled nonstop lies and misinformation about the election, who tried to bully our top elections official into illegally throwing out ballots?

Is it for the unethical lawyers on his team who bogged our judicial system down with dozens of frivolous lawsuits trying to overturn the election?

Or is HB 531 for the domestic terrorists who murdered police officers on Capitol Hill?

Because HB 531 is certainly not for Georgians, especially not Black and Brown Georgians who have spilled rivers of blood for centuries fighting for their right to vote.

The choice is clear.

If our great state is to bridge a gap in voter access that is already too wide ... we must stop HB 531.

The right to vote is too precious and too sacred to be thrown away in surrender to lies, conspiracy theories, and domestic terrorists.

So, let's make sure that every elected official in this state hears our message loud and clear, today, and every day after.

Let Georgia Vote

Thank you.