May 22, 2026

Senate Judiciary Committee
New Jersey State House
125 W State St, Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: S282, The John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey

Dear Chair Stack, Vice-Chair Singleton-Jackson, and members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of **CAIR-New Jersey** to express our strong support for passing and fully funding *the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey (S282)*, which is a New Jersey-specific state voting rights act.

CAIR-NJ is dedicated to representing and advocating for Muslims across New Jersey that come from a wide range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. As an organization committed to ensuring that all communities can fully participate in civic life, CAIR-NJ believes that equal access to voting is essential to maintaining New Jersey as an inclusive place where diverse groups of people can thrive. Protecting voting rights helps ensure that every community has an equal voice in the democratic process and that historically marginalized populations are not excluded from decisions that directly impact their lives. In a time of increasing uncertainty about the protection of voting rights at the federal level, New Jersey should take a stand in protecting those communities and their right to vote.

For many immigrant and multilingual Muslim communities in New Jersey these protections are especially crucial. Many Muslim voters come from communities where English is not the primary language spoken at home and where navigating voting procedures, accessing English language materials, or understanding voter eligibility requirements can present additional barriers to participation. Stronger language access protections, clearer voter education, and safeguards against intimidation and deceptive practices will help ensure that Muslim and immigrant communities are able to fully and confidently participate in New Jersey's democracy[1].

Black Americans have historically faced some of the most significant barriers to voting. Because voter suppression laws have historically and disproportionately impacted Black Americans, voting rights protections are also highly relevant to the Muslim community. Nearly 28 percent of

[1] Morris, K. (n.d.). *The impact of voter suppression on communities of color*. Brennan Center for Justice. Brennan Center for Justice

Muslims in the United States identify as Black or African American[2]. Efforts to protect voting rights are not only crucial to racial justice broadly but are also directly linked to ensuring full political participation for a substantial portion of the American Muslim community. By strengthening voting rights safeguards, the majority of American Muslims will be able to participate fully in civic life.

A strong New Jersey-specific voting rights act (NJVEA) will: (1) establish a state "preclearance" program that makes local governments with a history of discrimination prove to the state that certain changes to the voting process would not harm voters of color before they go into effect; (2) provide new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules and procedures in court; (3) expand language access and assistance for voters with limited English proficiency so that they can fully participate in the democratic process; (4) pass strong protections against intimidation, deception, or obstruction at the polls for voters and election workers; (5) create a public, central database for election and demographic data information that would empower officials and communities to ensure accessible elections; and (6) make sure local and state voting laws, procedures, and regulations do not deny voters of color and other protected categories of voters the right to cast their vote.

NJVEA if passed, would be one of the most extensive state-level voting rights acts in the country, expanding on successful laws already existing in Maryland, Colorado, Virginia, New York, Connecticut, California, Washington, Oregon, and Minnesota.

NJVEA will strengthen New Jersey's democracy and help solidify New Jersey's national leadership on voting rights at a time when voting rights are under attack at the federal level. And, most importantly, it will help New Jersey voters more equally access the ballot and protect their fundamental right to vote.

With the federal VRA weakened, we cannot wait; we need you to protect our voting rights when the federal government won't.

Therefore, we strongly urge this Committee to pass S282, the *John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey* today.

Sincerely,

Naureen Akhter

Public Affairs Director, CAIR-NJ

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[2] Selod, S., Mogahed, D., Ikramullah, E., & Baker, S. (2025). ***American Muslim Poll 2025: Evolving electorate, enduring challenges***. Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. Institute for Social Policy & Understanding