

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### New York Votes Act A5312 (Cusick)

The New York Democratic Lawyers Council (NYDLC) strongly supports the enactment of the policies included in the New York Votes Act (A5312).

This bill would overhaul New York's voting systems and procedures by simplifying voter registration and the voting process and enhancing access to the ballot. The key provisions of the bill include: (1) automatic registration of eligible voters; (2) same-day registration for new voters; (3) online voter registration and absentee ballot applications; (4) permanent voter registration (portability), so voters stay registered when they move; (5) allow registered voters to change party enrollment several months closer to primary day; (6) a system of early voting; (7) "no excuse" absentee voting; (8) uniformity of poll site hours across the state; (9) consolidating the federal, state and local primaries saving millions of dollars; (10) disaster preparedness protections; (11) increased language access; (12) protection of voters from improper challenges; (13) restoration of voting rights for citizens on parole; (14) professionalizing BOE commissioner and poll worker training and recruitment; and, (15) reimbursement of localities for certain extra costs.

The overhaul proposed by the New York Votes Act would eradicate barriers to access that exist due to New York's restrictive and outdated voting laws, and improve practices by NVRA agencies and Boards of Elections. With New York ranking 41st in 2016 voter turnout (44th in 2014),<sup>1</sup> and with 2 million eligible New Yorkers not even registered, New York has fallen behind as states adopt many of the pro-voter reforms proposed in this bill. Already, 37 states have some form of early voting<sup>2</sup> and 34 offer online registration.<sup>3</sup> What is urgently needed is a major overhaul of how New York votes. This bill would modernize our elections, ensuring that New York is no longer cited by states that attempt to curb voter access.<sup>4</sup> **For the foregoing reasons, NYDLC strongly supports enactment of the policies included in A5312.**

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<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit Vote and US Elections Project, *America Goes to the Polls 2016: A Report on Voter Turnout in the 2016 Election* 10 (2017), <http://bit.ly/2mXiJz3>.

<sup>2</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Absentee and Early Voting*, Mar. 20, 2017, <http://bit.ly/1ldSpXK> (visited May 20, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Online Voter Registration*, Jan. 31, 2017, <http://bit.ly/19pkE4h> (visited May 20, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> New York City Campaign Finance Board, *New York State Near Bottom in Voter Turnout Rankings*, July 21, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2pAr0Yz> (visited May 20, 2017); Jeffrey Toobin, *The Problem with Voting Rights in New York*, *The New Yorker*, Oct. 11, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2dJSomo> (visited May 20, 2017).