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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Hearing “Democracy in Danger: The Assault on Voting Rights in Texas” July 29, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Raskin, for convening today’s urgent and vital hearing. I want to thank you for your leadership on this issue and your enduring commitment to the legacy of our late Chairman Elijah Cummings and our late colleague Representative John Lewis, who both fought tirelessly to protect Americans’ right to vote.

This is a historic hearing—not just because of our distinguished witnesses but because of the brave actions they took to defend the rights of Texans against one of the most aggressive attempts at voter suppression we have seen anywhere in the country.

Now more than ever we must follow their example to ensure that these shameful attacks on the right to vote do not succeed. We must fight to fulfill the American promise that voters choose their elected representatives—rather than politicians picking their own voters.

When it comes to restricting the right to vote, our nation has an ugly past. Historical voter suppression measures included threats of lynching, poll taxes, and literacy tests.

Today, Texas remains the hardest state in the entire country for Americans to vote. Texas has repeatedly refused to implement reforms that would support greater voter engagement.

In 2013, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* blocked the Department of Justice from overseeing elections in places that historically discouraged and suppressed the votes of Black, Latino, and other communities of color. Since that decision, Texas has renewed its voter suppression with a vengeance. It has closed 750 polling sites, including 542 polling sites in counties with the largest increases in Black and Latino voters—more than any other state in the Union.

Now Texan Republicans are trying to add new restrictions to voting. Let’s be clear about what these bills are and what they are not. These bills are not an effort to make voting in Texas more secure. These bills are part of a racist campaign to decide who gets the right to vote. These bills take power and choice away from the people of Texas, and let the politicians decide who their voters are.

Simply put, these bills are an attack on voters and on the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

But there is a solution. Congress must act.

Congress must pass the [For the People Act](#), which would end institutional barriers to voting and ensure all eligible voters can register and cast their ballot.

Congress also must pass the [John Lewis Voting Rights Act](#) to restore and strengthen the landmark Voting Rights Act.

We must seize this moment to restore the vision of America as a nation of rights, where government derives its power from the people, not the other way around.

Representative Thompson, Representative Collier, Representative Bernal, thank you for your bravery and fearless commitment to protecting voting rights. To our other witnesses, thank you for being here today.

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