



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

August 23, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write in strong support of H.R. 4, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021.

Over the past decade, U.S. Supreme Court decisions such as *Shelby County v. Holder* and *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* have unfortunately eroded key protections provided by the Voting Rights Act that protect against racial discrimination in the voting process, giving many states the ability to suppress and discriminate against voters. This year alone, state lawmakers have introduced 400 bills and enacted 30 laws restricting access to voting in 48 states. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 would restore VRA protections by establishing a federal review process of changes to state voting laws. Potentially discriminatory changes would be paused until federal review is completed, and changes found to be discriminatory would be blocked entirely. Furthermore, strict oversight would be applied to states with histories of voter discrimination and policy changes known to be used to discriminate against voters of color.

Decades ago, the Institute of Medicine [established in a report](#) that voting is a public health issue because it helps shape "the conditions in which people can be healthy." The ballot box is where community members can come together to decide on key issues that shape our response to today's public health emergencies: police brutality, gun violence, climate change and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We commend Congresswoman Terri Sewell and the other sponsors for introducing this landmark legislation and the House for bringing it up for a vote. I write in strong support of H.R. 4 and urge you to vote yes on the bill. The provisions in this bill would support the advancement of racial and health equity, a key APHA priority and a crucial step toward achieving the healthiest nation in one generation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director