



Press Statement:  
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## **Coalition of Voting Rights Advocates Call for Passage of Legislation for Safe, Free and Fair Elections**

DOVER: A coalition of organizations issued a letter today to all members of the Delaware General Assembly calling on elected officials to pass House Bill 175 before they recess in June. HB 175 would allow all eligible Delaware voters to cast a vote by mail without an excuse, and would be in place for all 2020 elections.

“Voters must not be forced to choose between their health and their right to vote,” said Mike Brickner, executive director of the ACLU of Delaware. “Elected officials must act now to ensure every eligible voter will be able to cast a ballot freely and fairly in all 2020 elections. It is critical that this bill is passed, and can go into effect immediately so election officials can begin to prepare for an increase in vote by mail, and so civic groups may begin educating the public on how to cast their ballot by mail.”

“Every voice must be heard at the ballot box,” said Dr. Keith Pettiford, President of the New Castle County, Delaware National Pan-Hellenic Council. “The COVID-19 public health crisis has shown that vote by mail is an essential option for all voters. 34 states already allow voters to cast a ballot by mail without an excuse, so Delaware is trailing behind. The time is now for officials to modernize our election system and pass House Bill 175.”

“Delaware law does not currently allow no excuse absentee voting and there is no vote-by-mail,” said Carol Jones, President of the League of Women Voters of Delaware. “Last month Governor Carney delayed the presidential primary and expanded the reasons on the absentee ballot to include self isolation due to COVID-19. With the general election coming up November 3, we want to be proactive in developing alternatives to in person voting in case health risks still exist. The Wisconsin and Georgia elections exemplify a cautionary tale if a state is not prepared.”

Due to the pandemic, Governor Carney has issued an executive order allowing voters to utilize the excuse of sickness or disability if they wish to vote by mail for the upcoming July presidential primary election. His order currently does not include the November 2020



general election. A bill introduced last week, HB 346, promises many of the same things that HB 175 promises, with one important caveat: it would only be valid through this year's elections. **The coalition supports House Bill 175 (“HB 175”) and asks the legislature to make voting by mail a permanent voting method.** We do not oppose HB 346, but prefer HB 175 because it would offer a permanent solution to vote by mail beyond the 2020 elections.

The letter can be found online here: [https://www.aclu-de.org/sites/default/files/hb\\_175\\_letter\\_to\\_legislators.pdf](https://www.aclu-de.org/sites/default/files/hb_175_letter_to_legislators.pdf)

This press statement can be found online here: <https://www.aclu-de.org/en/news/dear-legislators-act-now-secure-november-election>