

# PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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RFI: Promoting Access to Voting

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Promoting Access To Voting

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## Submitter Information

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## General Comment

AIM Independent Living Center is a non-profit agency based in Corning, N.Y. which provides a wide array of supports and services to people with all types of disabilities.

AIM is part of the Statewide Systems Advocacy Network (SSAN), a network of independent living centers in New York state which advocates for positive change for people with disabilities and works to increase awareness of disability issues. These efforts include increasing civic engagement and voter turnout in the disability community. AIM is also represented on the Election Reform Committee, a subcommittee of the SSAN focused on improving election accessibility.

In the wake of the 2020 election, many states have passed, or are attempting to pass, laws which place restrictions on early voting and absentee voting. These methods of voting are relied upon by people with disabilities who face transportation issues, long lines, lack of accessibility and other barriers to voting in person on Election Day. These methods of voting are also safer for voters whose disabilities or health conditions make them vulnerable to COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.

The federal government, including the Department of Justice, should exert its influence to make sure laws passed by states do not make it even more difficult for people with disabilities to cast a ballot.

The federal election reform bill, H.R.1/S.1., which would be a counterweight to restrictive state-level voting laws, includes many aspects which would enhance accessibility for voters with disabilities. However, H.R.1/S.1 includes a paper ballot mandate which could deny voters with print disabilities their right to a private and independent vote. Voters who are blind or low vision or have certain physical or cognitive disabilities are unable to independently mark, verify and return a paper ballot.

Voters with print disabilities should be able to use secure electronic ballot marking and return technology

to vote safely, privately and independently from home. Any legislation passed at the state or federal level should not preclude this.

Thank you for your consideration.

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