



March 14, 2022

Members of the Illinois House Ethics and Elections Committee
Illinois State Capitol Building
401 S. Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701

The Honorable Kelly M. Burke, Chair
The Honorable Katie Stuart, Vice Chair
The Honorable Ryan Spain
The Honorable Carol Ammons
The Honorable Tom Demmer
The Honorable Daniel Didech
The Honorable Marcus C. Evans, Jr.
The Honorable Edgar Gonzalez, Jr.
The Honorable Natalie A. Manley
The Honorable Martin McLaughlin
The Honorable Tim Ozinga
The Honorable Robert Rita
The Honorable Tom Weber
The Honorable Blaine Wilhour
The Honorable Ann M. Williams
The Honorable Patrick Windhorst
The Honorable Sam Yingling
The Honorable Michael J. Zalewski

Dear Representative _____:

The undersigned organizations write to support and strongly urge amendment of SB 829 to make the vote by mail process accessible for voters with print disabilities for the June 28, 2022, Primary Election, and all subsequent elections.

Illinoisans without disabilities have an unfettered right to vote privately and independently whether they vote in person or by mail. Yet, under current law Illinoisans with print disabilities must give up this right if they need or prefer to vote by mail. Individuals who request to vote by mail are sent a paper ballot which must be marked, signed and returned to the local election authority (“LEA”) by mail or in person. Voters with print disabilities are forced to ask a person without disabilities for assistance in completing and submitting their ballots. They are thus denied the opportunity to exercise their right to vote that is equal to that afforded to voters without disabilities, including the ability to vote privately and independently, as required by the federal Help America Vote Act (“HAVA”), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), and the Rehabilitation Act.

Following disability advocates’ discussions and negotiations with the State Board to address this disparity, the State Board agreed to purchase and make available to LEAs free of charge computer software that allowed voters with print disabilities to electronically receive and mark their vote by mail ballots using their own assistive technology for the 2020 General Election.

SB 829 requires the State Board to provide a remote accessible vote by mail system that allows voters with print disabilities to receive, mark and verify vote by mail ballots electronically for the November 8, 2022, General Election, and all subsequent elections. It does not require the State Board to do so for the June 28, 2022, Primary Election. In a dramatic step backward, SB 829 will render vote by mail totally inaccessible for voters with print disabilities in the Primary Election and deny them the opportunity to vote by mail privately and independently.

We strongly urge you to support an amendment to SB 829 that will require the State Board to provide a remote accessible vote by mail system for the June 28, 2022, Primary Election, and all subsequent elections, and thus expand, not eliminate, accessibility of the vote by mail process.

Sincerely,

Equip for Equality

National Federation of the Blind of Illinois

Illinois Council of the Blind

Access Living

Reform for Illinois

Disability Lead

Institute on Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois Chicago

Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living

Don Moss & Associates

Illinois Assistive Technology Program

The Chicago Lighthouse

Progress Center for Independent Living

The Arc of Illinois
League of Women Voters of Illinois
Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition
American Association of University Women, Naperville, IL area
Indivisible Illinois
Common Cause Illinois
League of Women Voters of Chicago
Congregation Hakafa
She Votes Illinois
National Council on Jewish Women Chicago North Shore
SEIU Healthcare IL
National Council of Jewish Women South Cook
Illinois NOW

Contact: Cheryl R. Jansen, Public Policy Director, Equip for Equality,
cherylj2@equipforequality.org, 217-720-7780