

January 19, 2022

Honorable Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sinema,


On behalf of social workers and social work allies, we urge you to change your position on the filibuster and vote to pass the *Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act*.

We are calling on you, as a fellow social worker, to respond to the urgency and crisis that is unfolding in our fragile democracy and take the necessary steps to ensure voting rights for all Americans. In this moment, 19 states have enacted 34 new laws that restrict access to the ballot box in 2021 alone, and many more bills remain under consideration. To date, more than 400 bills have been introduced at the state level to suppress the right to vote. Such anti-voting rights efforts have sweeping impacts on communities of color, LGBTQ+ communities, students, veterans, people living with disabilities, and older adults.

We wish to express deep regret and concern that you, one of our professional colleagues, has taken an unyielding position supporting the preservation of the filibuster, an archaic procedure historically adopted by members of the United States Senate, which continues to block bills that would otherwise pass by majority vote.

As social workers, we are called to uphold the principle of social justice, as outlined in our professional [NASW Code of Ethics](#), which states that we “pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people”. Given the guiding ethics and values of our profession, it is therefore very difficult to reconcile your position on the filibuster because of its harmful legacy in the perpetuation of Jim Crow legislation, and in its use in denying people of color, LGBTQ+ Americans, and other historically marginalized and oppressed groups from access to civil rights and full citizenship.

Your steadfast position in support of the filibuster continues to obstruct the potential for debate, consideration, and the subsequent advancement of voting rights legislation in Congress. As a senator, leader, and social worker you must decide if you will **respond to the urgency of this moment and protect the right to vote or not**. Failure to act in this moment will contribute to irreversible harm to our democracy.



We are calling on you now to do whatever it takes to support the passage of *the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act*. This bill will go a long way to ensure that voters can safely and freely cast their ballots. This legislation aims to repair and strengthen the Voting Rights Act of 1965, protect against election sabotage, stop partisan and racial gerrymandering, and limit the influence of dark money in politics.

As a senator and social worker, we are asking you to remember that you are entrusted with the most sacred duties of protecting the central tenets of democracy, of ensuring access to the ballot box for all Americans, and of prioritizing the needs of our most vulnerable and underserved neighbors. **It is within your power to stand on the right side of history**, and to take action to remove the insurmountable obstacles for people of color and historically marginalized populations that are being set in place to deny them their constitutional right to a fair and free vote.

Respectfully,



Angelo McClain, PhD, LICSW
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Social Workers