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October 12, 2018

The Honorable Jefferson Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

I am writing to strongly object to what I believe is a complete abdication of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) voting rights oversight responsibilities. The current state of election integrity across the nation is in a tenuous position thanks to your intentionally lax approach to enforcement of voting rights laws. Bad actors in governments in various states have been deliberately compromising fair elections with impunity. Specifically, an egregious case of voter suppression in Georgia has led to tens of thousands of voters being disenfranchised. In the wake of the Voting Rights Act being severely weakened more than five years ago, the current Department's silence is deafening and its unwillingness to defend this constitutionally protected right is alarming.

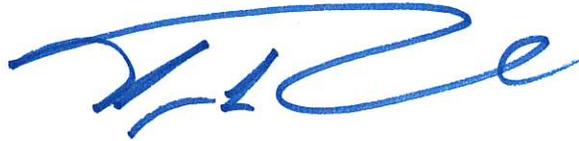
Georgia's latest foray into voter suppression is once again being spearheaded by Secretary of State Brian Kemp in a nefarious attempt to suppress the African American vote in advance of a competitive gubernatorial election that pits him against a Black female candidate. It has been widely reported that at least 53,000 registrations throughout the state of Georgia have been put on hold because of purported inaccuracies uncovered by the "exact match" verification process—a controversial system that just last year faced a legal challenge under its previous iteration. This system is notorious for its racially disparate impact and its overly sensitive dragnet approach. Despite the Kemp campaign's unsubstantiated claims that "it has never been easier to vote" in Georgia, an Associated Press investigative report discovered that almost 70 percent of the registrations currently placed on hold were filed by prospective black voters.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Secretary Kemp has targeted black voters with laser precision. Just last month, his close affiliate devised a plan that was considered, and ultimately rejected by the Randolph County Board of Elections, that would have shuttered more than three quarters of the county's polling locations—including one that is 97 percent African American. In that instance, as I am now, the Congressional Black Caucus aptly pointed out DOJ's

conspicuous absence. Today, I reiterate that view while also registering my concern about other states' unwillingness to forcefully commit to voting rights.

As the arm of the federal government formally charged with conducting civil rights oversight, I am vehemently opposed to the Department's hands-off enforcement approach. As reports pour in from several other jurisdictions across the country, I am troubled by the lengths at which some local officials are going to undermine the voice of key constituencies—including the apparent suppression of young people of color in places like Texas. That is simply unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. A fully functioning democracy is a moral imperative if our nation is truly committed to its quest for a more perfect union. That, unfortunately, cannot be achieved without robust leadership and engagement from the Department in times of peril and injustice.

Sincerely,



Cedric L. Richmond
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus