Statement on Voting Rights by Higher Education Organizations

April 13, 2021

“Our educational institutions aspire to help create a just, vibrant, and democratic society. Colleges and universities believe that fostering informed civic engagement is a central goal of a postsecondary education. We teach students that there is no more important or better way to nourish a flourishing democracy than by encouraging all eligible voters to exercise their right to cast a ballot for the candidates of their choice.

We back up our rhetoric with action. Colleges often lead voter registration drives, serve as polling places in their communities, and act as the public square for important civic conversations. Indeed, every one of the presidential and vice presidential debates held in this century has been on a college campus. Students themselves often play critical roles in these efforts. College students were at the forefront of the struggle to ensure that the constitutional right of Black citizens to vote was upheld in states and communities that sought to curtail those rights. The cost of that work was measured in ballots cast, but also in blood and lives lost.

Expanding suffrage to include all citizens is a hallmark of American history. While not rapid, smooth, or easy, four separate constitutional amendments and landmark legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have enabled more Americans to participate in our democracy.

For these reasons, just as the integrity of our electoral system is essential, we strongly oppose the many efforts currently underway across the nation to suppress voting by qualified voters. We stand with all who seek to expand rather than restrict voting and civic participation. We are particularly concerned with proposals that would roll back some of that progress by raising barriers to student voting, including prohibiting students from using their campus addresses to register or qualify for absentee ballots.

Exercising the right to vote should not be controversial or challenging. The right to vote defines us as a nation. We call on lawmakers to take action to ensure that civic participation in America continues to move forward, not backward, and that the United States has the most inclusive and equitable democracy in the world.”

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream
ACPA-College Student Educators International
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association