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November 14, 2022

Priority Legislation for Remainder of 117th Congress

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 230 national advocacy organizations, we urge you to take prompt action on several key civil and human rights priority bills as the Senate returns to complete its legislative business in the 117th Congress. As of this writing, the landscape in the 118th Congress—and with it, the prospects for legislative action—remains uncertain. Yet there are several bills that are not only long overdue for Senate passage, but which we believe have the support necessary to pass this year.

In particular, we urge that you bring up and support moving the following legislation across the finish line:

- The Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act represents a significant advance forward in protecting our democracy from future attacks on presidential elections. The bill, which builds on bipartisan legislation that passed the House earlier this year, contains important reforms to modernize the process for certifying and counting electoral votes. As we noted in a [letter to the Senate](#) earlier this year, this represents only the beginning of Congress's discharge of its constitutional obligations to safeguard our democratic processes. Congress must also address urgent threats to voting rights for people of color across the country and pass robust federal voting rights protections.
- The Respect for Marriage Act would repeal the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 (DOMA) and codify the Supreme Court's rulings in *United States v. Windsor* (2013) and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), which found that DOMA's provisions were unenforceable. It would ensure lasting stability and certainty to married couples at the federal and state levels. As marriage equality has been the law of the land for years, and as the public has come to accept that discrimination is wrong, it is time for our federal statutes to catch up—and for Congress to state unequivocally that the debate over marriage equality is finished.



- The [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act \(PWFA\)](#) would clarify employers' obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers so they can continue to work without jeopardizing either their health or the economic security of their families. This issue disproportionately harms Black and Latina workers in low-paid, inflexible jobs, including frontline workers hailed as essential during the pandemic. The PWFA passed the House and the Senate HELP Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support and is now ready to pass the full chamber. The Senate must not miss this historic opportunity to ensure that pregnant workers do not have to choose between a paycheck and a healthy pregnancy.
- Extending the child tax credit (CTC) would significantly reduce child poverty and improve economic mobility, particularly for families of color, without reducing workforce participation. The temporary expansion included in the American Rescue Plan Act benefited millions of families and reduced the child poverty rate to a record low of 5.2 percent, the largest year-to-year drop ever. Unfortunately, these gains evaporated as soon as the monthly CTC payments ended. Congress must take action to expand the CTC in order to help children in struggling families.

It is also urgent that Congress address legal relief for Dreamers, i.e., immigrants who came to the United States as children but who lack visas. They have long had bipartisan support in Congress and among the public, but recent litigation has only added to the uncertainty they face in the long term.

We note that the above constitutes a far from exhaustive list of legislation that Congress can and should pass this year. Throughout the 117th Congress, we have been dismayed by the Senate's obstruction of a number of bills that passed the House and that enjoy widespread support among the public, including in the areas of voting rights, police and criminal-legal reform, immigration reform, statehood for the District of Columbia, protections against LGBTQ discrimination, education, health care, affordable housing, employment, and many others. As we move forward from the midterm congressional elections, it is our sincere hope that partisan tensions will ease, and that the Senate can finally take meaningful action on these priorities in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Randhava, senior counsel, at randhava@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

Maya Wiley
President & CEO

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