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January 24, 2014

The Honorable Eric Holder
U.S. Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
Robert F. Kennedy Building
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I draw your attention to another thinly veiled attempt to limit Ohioans' participation in the electoral process, and ask the Department of Justice to monitor Ohio closely to protect access to the right to vote.

Last week, the Ohio Secretary of State announced the dates and hours of Early In-Person voting for the May 6, 2014 primary. The Secretary limited the number of weekends and evenings available for early voting to one Saturday morning and one weekday evening, restricting access to Early In-Person voting. This change will significantly impact the opportunities for certain demographic groups, such as the elderly, students, minorities, working class, and low-income voters. It will clearly have a disproportionate impact on African Americans in Ohio.

According to a Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights report published in October 2012, African Americans were 26 times more likely to participate in Early In-Person voting than Caucasian voters in the largest part of my district—Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The study shows African American voters made up approximately 77.9% of all Early In-Person ballots in the county while Caucasian voters only made up 6.7% of those ballots. In contrast, Caucasian voters made up 76.4% of all Vote-By-Mail absentee ballots while African Americans made up 19.7% of those ballots cast. It appears that efforts to curb early voting in Ohio have been largely geared toward reducing Early In-Person voting.

Unlike past attempts to disenfranchise Ohioans, such as the partially repealed omnibus voting bill, H.B. 194, Ohio now seems to be incrementally, if not insidiously, chipping away at the protections and efforts for greater access and participation in the electoral process. In November 2013, I wrote to draw your attention to state bills H.B. 269 and S. 238, legislation introduced to impose restrictive voter identification laws, shorten the number of early voting days and eliminate same day registration opportunities. Since then, additional measures have been

introduced, which would discourage rather than encourage participation in elections. These separate pieces of legislation and policy decisions will have the cumulative effect of reducing access for minority voters.

I urge you to examine and monitor the voting climate in Ohio and the steady assault on voters' access to the polls. We must remain vigilant in ensuring all Ohioans have the ability to exercise their right to vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcia L. Fudge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress