

June 25, 2020

Statement of Brennan Center President, Michael Waldman, in support of H.R.51—the Washington, D.C. Admission Act

“The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law strongly supports the Washington, D.C. Admission Act and encourages Members of the House and Senate to vote in support of D.C. Statehood. The over 700,000 residents of Washington, D.C. — the majority of whom are people of color—deserve the same right to vote, home rule, and full representation in Congress granted to every other American.

The Brennan Center’s work defending, reforming, and revitalizing our systems of democracy and justice—including the urgent fight against disenfranchisement—requires us to support D.C. Statehood. The past few weeks, during which federal, militarized police and other forces were able to run roughshod over the rights of D.C. citizens protesting against police brutality and for equal rights, have reminded us all of the consequences of such a system. Peaceful protestors making their voices heard have faced arbitrary and unequal limitations on their First Amendment rights; this cannot continue. And in the face of the coronavirus crisis and subsequent economic fallout, D.C. has been refused much of the financial aid that other states were given by Congress, despite the fact that D.C. residents are full participants in paying federal taxes.

Full voting representation in Congress for D.C., as well as the accompanying equal voice in our democracy, will only be achieved through D.C. Statehood. Congress should address this injustice and eliminate second-class citizenship for D.C. residents. We believe that the best path forward is through the Washington, D.C. Admission Act.”