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## A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON H. 4919, PROVIDING NO-EXCUSE EARLY VOTING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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The League greatly appreciates the movement toward no-excuse early voting for South Carolinians in H.4919. However, we have several important concerns.

The bill requires that early polling places include the county election office and that none can be within 10 miles of another. This would lead to very disproportionate numbers of voters attempting to use early polling places in large urban centers and would also reduce the total number of polling places in some counties significantly below those otherwise permitted by the formula. Richland County, for example, would include all of densely populated Columbia voting in one location (the Harden Street office, where office space, parking, and access are problematic) while other polling places would be as far away as Hopkins. Charleston County would be limited to three locations, a significant reduction from their current practice. Aside from the practical difficulties of cramming so many voters into a few locations, some of the state's largest minority communities would be within the areas most affected by crowding and its attendant impediments to voting, such as lengthy delays.

The bill requires that applications for absentee ballots and ballot envelopes include voter identification numbers that can be taken from a range of government issued photo identifications, from passports to military identifications. Election offices have no access to the databases of these numbers, so they cannot be verified when received. This provision will simply lead to ballots being discarded if the number is entirely absent. On the other hand, Texas has attempted a system of verifying ID numbers that has led to discarding very high percentages of absentee ballot applications (20-50%) and it is important that South Carolina not follow in their footsteps. In the absence of any evidence that there is a problem to be solved, this provision should be deleted. If it is not, it must be very carefully structured.

Finally, South Carolina needs a "notice and cure" provision for absentee ballots, so that voters will be notified if their absentee application or absentee ballot is found defective. Voters should be aware of and able to correct deficiencies so that their votes are counted.