

Government and Administration Election Committee
Connecticut State Legislature
Hartford, Ct. 06106

Ms. Jane K. Alpert
177 Blackwood Lane
Stamford, Ct. 06903

February 18, 2021

Re: Testimony for 2/22/21 Hearing on H.J. 58 for Absentee Ballots/H.J. 59 for Early Voting

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of H.J. 58 for Absentee Ballots and H.J. 59 for Early Voting.

A democratic society is by its very nature founded on citizen participation. The basic threshold for citizen participation is voting. Our approach to voting in Connecticut is too rigid for the changing landscape of the pandemic, severe weather and partisan divides that raise fears of voter intimidation at voting sites. Voting is the voice of the citizenry; rigid voting practices mute that voice.

We may hope and pray that the pandemic will end before the next election, that it will never repeat and that therefore there is no reason to take the pandemic into consideration when deliberating on H.J. 58 and H.J. 59. However, President Biden has stated that he “hopes” that we will be back to a semblance of normal by December 2021; Dr. Anthony Fauci has said that there are many factors that will impact the timing of our getting back to “normal” including effectiveness of vaccines against variants and the willingness of individuals to practice protective behaviors for many more months. With this timeline, the next November election, and special elections before then, will be impacted by the pandemic. Hopes and prayers are good, but practical solutions to known problems are a more effective legislative approach. Rather than a one-off or piecemeal approach, Connecticut needs to make our voting processes more flexible for the short and long term, more adaptable to meet known and unknown challenges.

Connecticut now has experience with expanded mail in voting in the last election, an experience that was without major issues. This trial run has shown that Connecticut state and local officials are up to the challenge of running an election with expanded mail in options. Additionally, there are over 30 States and the District of Columbia that conduct elections by all mail in voting or with no excuse absentee ballots (See National Conference of State Legislatures, www.ncsl.org). Many states have early voting. To use process or fraud arguments against either mail in or early voting in Connecticut is essentially to say that Connecticut is less

able, less competent than those other jurisdictions; to say that Connecticut will fail where other jurisdictions have succeeded. This is an argument that I find offensive. I believe Connecticut has the talent and the competency to run a fair, secure and efficient voting process that includes no excuse mail in voting and/or early voting.

Finally, Connecticut should shoot higher than H.J. 58 and H.J. 59. Connecticut should not only pass H.J. 58 for Absentee Ballots and H.J. 59 for Early Voting but it should challenge itself to lead the nation in voter participation through expanded voting access, public messaging and education. Connecticut should do this because it will be good for Connecticut's reputation and growth. The practical outcome of expanded participation will be government more in tune with its citizens. Who wouldn't want to live, work and open a business in a state with a reputation for listening to and encouraging its citizens to participate?

Thank you for your time,

Jane Alpert