

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.J. 58: RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Dear GAE Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Fox, Vice Chairs Sen. Haskell and Rep. Thomas, and Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco and Members of the GAE Committee,

My name is Paula Bacolini, I have lived in Glastonbury, CT for over 35 years. I am the founder and leader of Make Voting Easy-CT, a grassroots organization with nearly 1,000 members from 95 cities and towns across CT, who are devoted to making voting more convenient and accessible. In 2020, I joined SafeVoteCT, a group of statewide grassroots leaders supporting election reforms to enable all voters to cast their votes safely by absentee ballot, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you all for voting to provide absentee ballots to all registered voters, during the 2020 election season. I am writing **in support of H.J. 58: RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**

We experienced first hand how easy and convenient it was to vote in 2020 with an absentee ballot, and to be able to either mail or securely drop off our absentee ballots in the Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes outside of our Town Halls. We applaud you and the CT General Assembly for making this possible. Although these reforms were instituted and supported by a bipartisan supermajority of the CT House and Senate during Summer Special Legislative Sessions in 2020, they were not permanent.

As a senior and a person at high risk for contracting COVID-19, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to vote by absentee ballot without restrictions and to use the ballot drop box in my town. In the 2020 election, there was no “widespread voter fraud”, as some had thought may be the case, and both Republicans and Democrats were elected by absentee ballots that represented 35% of CT voters. We had a choice and we were able to keep our communities safe and our elections secure, and still receive final election results within a few days after election day.

As we are still continuing to live with the fear of COVID-19, which is mutating and continuing to spread, we need to look to the future and provide permanent No-Excuse Absentee Voting to all registered CT voters.

In January 2021, Secure Democracy a non-partisan organization's polling of 808 CT voters found that overwhelmingly 79% supported secure absentee ballot drop boxes; 66% supported allowing voters to request an absentee ballot through a secure website; and 79% supported local election officials notifying voters of disqualifying mistakes and offering them the choice to fix those mistakes.

According to Secretary of the State Merrill, overall, 73% of CT voters supported the choice to vote by absentee ballot and keep the polls open. This reflected 79% of 18 to 34 year old voters, and 75% of 65 year old and up. Voters overwhelmingly supported expanding voter access to absentee ballots. This accounted for 48% of Republicans and 44% of Trump voters, along with 75% of unaffiliated voters, 89% of Democrats, and 92% of Biden voters.

According to the National Conference of State Legislators, 31 states and D.C. provide no-excuse absentee voting, which includes three states that mail ballots to all eligible voters, and many states offer both. It is time for CT to offer their registered voters the same opportunities.

I am urging you to give voters the choice of easy access to voting safely and securely by No-Excuse Absentee Ballot. Please Vote YES for HJ 58 and vote this bill out of the GAE Committee to the floor of the CT House and Senate for a vote by the CT General Assembly.

Thank you for your consideration. We are all grateful to you for holding virtual public hearings and for your continued work for the citizens of CT throughout this pandemic. Please stay safe and well.

Respectfully,
Paula Bacolini
Glastonbury, CT
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Formerly Leader of the following organizations that are now also part of Make Voting Easy-CT: Democracy Awakens CT - Voting Rights Team, Let People Vote Team, and the Glastonbury Huddle