

Support for HJ 58: Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting and HJ 59: Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting

Dear Members of the GAE Committee,

We pride ourselves as a nation on the strength of our democracy, yet we create barriers that prevent full participation of all our citizens in our elections. I was fortunate to have studied at Columbia University under the late Richard Cloward who was a primary motivator for the passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. Among his many contributions in the field of social justice was a book he authored, *Why Americans Don't Vote: And Why Politicians Want it That Way*. Our country has a long and shameful history of restricting voting rights which disproportionately impact low-income individuals and those of color. While less obvious than the literacy tests and voter registration requirements of the 20th century, we continue to disenfranchise voters with unnecessary voting restrictions. COVID forced states to re-think voting and make it easier for individuals to cast their ballots in 2020. The results were unprecedented voter turnout without any evidence of fraud. Isn't that what we all want in a healthy democracy? Shouldn't that be how it is in all elections moving forward?

As someone who has volunteered at polling locations, I have seen numerous people speeding in just before, and sometimes, unfortunately, just after 8pm because a train was late, a shift or commute took longer than anticipated, the other caregiver did not make it home in time to watch children, and more. Let's put an end to unnecessary restrictions that make it difficult and stressful for so many Americans to fully participate in our democracy. It is time that the 'Constitution State' step up and join the majority of states in allowing early voting or no excuse absentee voting.

Thank you,

Jennifer Barahona, Fairfield, CT