

Testimony in SUPPORT of:

HJ 58: Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting

HJ 59: Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early 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, Sen. Witkos, and Rep. Anderson,

The successful implementation this year of no-excuse absentee ballots was evidence of how easy and how *right* this was. Certainly, this year was different, and, let's hope, unique, because of COVID-19. Sometimes, though, emergency actions illustrate how we can (and should) change things going forward.

I suppose I have always felt that a democracy should be based on the voices of as many of the people as possible. Whether it is a matter of necessity, hardship, or merely convenience, it shouldn't matter. A registered voter should be allowed, no, *encouraged* to vote. Voters who are physically unable to get to the polls, will be out of town, or feel, somehow, uneasy about going in person to vote, must be allowed the choice of an absentee (or mail-in) ballot. Connecticut is among the diminishing number of states that do not offer that blanket option. Frankly, I have always been under the impression that folks in the Northeast would be more amenable to broadening the options for people, increasing accessibility, rather than the other way around. I was shocked to find it was not so.

In addition, adding the option of early voting, as *most other states do* is a no-brainer. It takes the load off poll workers, one of which I have been, by decreasing the crowd on that one day. People who look forward to casting a vote in person, but cannot do so on Election Day, would be able to do so, just earlier (and then, of course, they'd proudly wear their "I Voted" sticker!).

It appears most of the Connecticut electorate agrees. According to data released by the Secretary of the State, "73% of Connecticut voters support giving all voters the option to vote by absentee ballot while keeping polling places open, including 79% of voters aged 18 to 34 and 75% of voters aged 65 and up. Numbers supporting early voting are similar.

I would think this would be a win-win situation for all of you. By voting YES to these, you are *not supporting or opposing* Absentee Voting for all or Early Voting. Rather, you are simply voting YES to allow your constituents to express their opinion on whether or not they want voting to be easier, accessible and convenient in Connecticut via a ballot referendum. I would think your electorate would appreciate the respect you have for them by giving them the chance to weigh in on these options.

Many voters do not understand that if the NEAV legislation does not pass with at least a 75% majority they will have to wait until *at least 2026* for the choice to make voting an easier, more accessible process for all of us. Don't we want to hear from more of our

voters, more of *your constituents*? My guess is that you all went into public service *to serve the public*. This is a no-sweat way to let that happen.

I strongly urge you to vote **YES on HJ 58** in support of a **Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting** which would allow all registered voters to choose to vote by absentee ballot and in support of **HJ 59: Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting** to allow all registered voters to choose to vote early.

Very sincerely,
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