

Testimony on HJ 58

A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting
General Administration and Elections Committee

February 22, 2021

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Haskell, Representative Thomas, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and other esteemed Committee members, my name is Win Evarts and I live in Norwalk and I'm the Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) and promoting opportunities for their inclusion in the full life of their communities. I'm here today to support HJ 58, A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting.

Connecticut's efforts to accommodate and facilitate voting during the 2020 elections, during a long-running pandemic that negatively impacted the way its citizens lived, worked, played, and participated in their communities yielded near record-breaking voter participation of almost 80% and the more than 650,000 absentee ballots that were securely cast were a very big contributor.

By amending the State Constitution to permit No-Excuse absentee voting, Connecticut will enable voters that work multiple jobs, balance family and job obligations, rely on others for transportation or other assistance in navigating their community, and/or are just travelling to participate in our democracy. This is every eligible voter's right.

No-Excuse voting has the characteristics that we look for in evaluating how well our democracy's infrastructure functions: it's safe, cost effective, efficient, accessible, inclusive, and secure. By providing multiple methods of participating, voters can develop their individual strategy for casting their vote by mailing, using a secure ballot drop box or delivering their ballot to their Town Clerk's office. As testimony to how well Connecticut's voting process performed, pandemic and newness of process included, fewer than 1% of the ballots rejected.

This resolution potentially enables tremendously more access to individuals with I/DD, their family members, and those that support them to participate in our democracy. As an organization that promotes inclusion through community participation, we fully support this initiative.

Thank you for your efforts to improve the lives of all the people who live in Connecticut.

Win Evarts, Executive Director

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