

Good morning Committee, my name is Lauren Gray and I live in Norwalk.

I'm testifying in support of early voting and no-excuse absentee balloting to make it easier for every voter to participate in our free and fair elections.

With early voting and no-excuse absentee ballots, those who still want to go to the polls on Tuesday for actual Election Day can! Early voting extends the opportunity to workers and parents to have more than one option to go vote. When I lived in North Carolina and Georgia, we had early voting. I was shocked when I moved here that we would not be able to vote early. It should be easier in Connecticut to vote, not harder.

My main points:

1. CT is behind in access to the ballot.
2. Vote by mail is safe and secure.
3. Access to the ballot via early voting and no-excuse absentee balloting is beneficial for those in our communities that struggle with Election Day voting, yet want to participate.

Reputable studies show early voting increases voter turn out and cuts wait times at the polls. Voting by mail is safe and secure. Many states, like where my brother lives in Oregon, have been doing this successfully for years.

When we vote, we're not simply voting on candidates or issues. We also have to make a decision about how to get to the polls, whether we can spare the time to go there and who will watch the kids while we're gone.

When canvassing in Bridgeport, I met a single mom with three kids who told me she could not afford to vote. To take the time off her job, wait for the bus, stand in line at the polls and pay for childcare while she was gone. She knew she could not legally vote via absentee ballot without one of the listed excused, so she had never voted. This is just one real example.

I heard a lot of questions about the state's Constitution earlier. Laws are meant to be updated with the times, that's why there are amendments. I also want to thank the committee for hosting this hearing over Zoom so more people can access it without taking time off work or away from family to testify on important matters. Anyone concerned about access to technology for hearings should also be concerned about access to the ballot for elections.

Please vote to support early voting and no-excuse absentee ballot voting in Connecticut.

Lauren Gray
Norwalk, CT