

To: Chairpersons Flexer and Fox and Committee Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HJR 161, an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No Excuse Absentee Ballot

Dear Chairpersons Flexer and Fox and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit a written testimony strongly supporting HJR 161 which would give Connecticut voters the right to early voting and to the no excuse absentee ballot

My name is Dee Hiatt. I'm a long time Connecticut voter who recognizes the benefits of early voting and easy access to absentee ballots.

Because of the pandemic in 2020, Connecticut allowed early voting as well as no excuse absentee ballots. The state and my town of Stratford did more than allow, however. They went out of their way to help voters do both. Well before the November election, I received in the mail a clear information sheet along with a request form for an absentee ballot and an addressed return envelope. Soon after, the absentee ballot arrived with clear instructions, an inner envelope for the completed ballot, and an outer addressed envelope. This streamlined service went to all CT voters without prejudice. How proud I was of our state. This was not connected to political parties but was democracy in action for all voters equally, making voting as accessible as possible, extending a helping hand to vote.

I did not expect this personal service that came to my home, addressed specifically to me. I did not expect such clear evidence of how much my vote was respected by my state and my town, regardless of party affiliation.

Now I cannot imagine not having this service, of not being able to choose the easiest way for me to vote. I'm aware of how many states do offer this service and the lesser number of states who still do not. I have not found any evidence that open access to absentee ballots, voting early, and voting by mail are any less safe than voting at a polling place. Voting in this expanded way has been in use in our country in enough states and for enough time for gathering statistics. Well-gathered statistics must be the determiner in making the decision to pass HJR 161. Single instances of dishonesty are likely to be found in any system. How one system of voting compares to another system in our country is to be decided by research data.

Ease of voting and accessibility of voting must be held in high regard. Expecting most citizens to get to the polls on one day is expecting a lot. Think of voters who cannot drive or cannot leave their homes or work or do not feel well. Think of those who would be more likely to vote if the ballot came to them. Voting is for all who qualify. Let the state provide more tried and true ways to vote. Let the state extend its generosity to all voters in the name of democracy.

Sincerely,

Dee Hiatt

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Sent from my iPhone