

## **Testimony Regarding**

### **HJ No. 58, Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting**

### **HJ No. 59 Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting**

#### **Government Administration and Election Committee February 22, 2021**

Good afternoon Chair Flexer, Chair Fox, and honorable members of the committee. My name is Jennifer Kohl and I am a registered voter in Waterford, Connecticut. Thank you all for the opportunity to testify. I am here to urge you to vote yes on passing both HJ 58 (No-Excuse Absentee Voting) and HJ 59 (Early Voting).

I registered to vote the day after my 18th birthday. As a political enthusiast, this was a monumental occasion for me. Going off to college that same year, however, I soon realized that voting is not as simple as filling in bubbles on a scantron. While my passion for civic engagement never subsided, there have certainly been multiple panicked calls to the town clerk.

This begs the question, though, why is voting so hard? Now as a full-time graduate student and waitress, many of my colleagues can attest that every year I asked them if they have a plan to vote. An answer I come across quite frequently, is that although someone is interested in civic engagement, they are unable to prioritize voting due to their work schedule, commute, and family lives. In a democratic society, however, we should not have to choose between our lives and voting.

This issue is so much larger than a college student fumbling through the absentee ballot process. Connecticut voters who are working full-time, working multiple jobs to make ends meet, supporting families, attending higher education, and so many more are being disenfranchised by Connecticut's archaic single-day voting.

With these two significant pieces of legislation, the Connecticut General Assembly has the opportunity to sustainably address this issue. I was among the record-breaking 80% of registered voters here in Connecticut to cast a ballot in the 2020 General Election election. I was also among the 650,000 voters in Connecticut who chose to vote via absentee ballot. I voted for the President of the United States on a Thursday night at 11:30 after a very long waitressing shift and put my ballot in my townhall's dropbox the next morning. So my answer to why voting is hard? Is that it really does not need to be. We saw in the 2020 General Election that no excuse absentee ballots are effective and secure, we also saw 43 other states successfully administer in-person early voting. In a well functioning democracy, high voter turnout should be the goal. We should be celebrating, protecting, and enacting mechanisms that enable more people to participate in elections.

I encourage you all to support these two incredibly important pieces of legislation because I believe that in Connecticut, we should prioritize and protect the democratic system.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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