



## Government Administration and Elections Public Hearing

### Letter of Support for House Joint Resolution No.58 (HJ58) and House Joint Resolution No.59 (HJ59)

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Barbara Lopez and I am the Director of Make the Road Connecticut. Make the Road Connecticut is a community based organization that builds power of immigrants and low-income Latinx communities. We believe our community deserves to live with dignity and to be seen for their humanity, regardless of their citizenship status, gender, race, class, sexuality or religion. We do this through community organizing, providing legal/survival services, developing leaders, and supporting policy innovation. Our priorities issues are fighting for economic justice, education equity, and immigration reform. Our member base consists of over 1,000 members. In addition, we are members of Bridgeport Safe Vote Coalition. Thank you for your leadership on [House Joint Resolution No. 58 \(HJ 58\)](#) and [House Joint Resolution No. 59 \(HJ 59\)](#).

Today, I am writing this letter of support on behalf of our members. We support HJ 58 and HJ 59. I strongly support these bills because they strengthen our democracy and expand our voting rights. By limiting in-person voting to election day and by placing restrictions on who is eligible to vote early by mail using an absentee ballot, our state is engaged in a system of voter suppression.

These restrictions disenfranchise Connecticut's low-income, working-class citizens (targeting our black and brown communities) while creating significant burdens on our disabled, home-bound, and elderly voters. In order to create an inclusive, multiracial democracy in this state, we need real, structural change. A system for mail-in voting and early voting would be significant - and HJ 58 and HJ 59 simply allow the voters of Connecticut to amend the constitution, thus creating the legislative pathway to these important pro-democracy reforms.

For the voters of Bridgeport, the amendments proposed in HJ 58 and 59 would revolutionize our local elections. For generations, it's been an open secret that Bridgeport voters suffer under absentee ballot fraud and abuse. Political operatives abuse the absentee ballot process by targeting and manipulating our youth, elderly, disabled, low-income, and Spanish-speaking residents, all for the purpose of controlling the outcome of our local elections.



Bridgeporters know the game is rigged, which drives our voter participation and civic engagement down. From 2015 to 2019, Bridgeport saw a 23% decrease in voter participation in our local elections.

By passing these two resolutions, the Connecticut voters will be able to decide whether to amend our constitution, thus enfranchising tens of thousands of Bridgeport voters to vote on their own accord and their own timeline - and diluting the power of abusers to target and manipulate our election results. In fact, in the 2020 Presidential election - thanks to the expanded access of absentee voting - Bridgeport far surpassed Connecticut's other large cities with a record 72% turnout! Our voters are educated and motivated! We just need to create the right environment for full enfranchisement and free and fair elections.

Voters we spoke with enjoyed using an absentee ballot from the safety of their home and the convenience of the ballot drop boxes. According to Common Cause, 73% of all Connecticut voters support giving all voters the option to vote using an absentee ballot without an excuse and nearly 80% of Connecticut voters support early voting.

I know you all believe strongly in democracy, voting rights, and fair elections. It's time to strengthen our democracy and expand voting rights by letting the voters of Connecticut decide.

Thank you for your time,

Barbara Lopez, Director of **Make the Road Connecticut**