

Testimony in support of:

House Bill 58 and Senate Bill 4: A resolution proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to permit no-excuse absentee voting

House Bill 59 and Senate Bill 3: A resolution proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to permit early voting.

Submitted by:

Kathy A. Lyon

P.O. Box 92

Cornwall, CT 06753

Dear Sen. Anwar, Sen. Winfield, Rep. Turca, Rep. Elliot, Rep. Michael and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Kathy Lyon and I live in Cornwall, Ct. I would like to see the elimination of the requirement that an elector needs to satisfy a particular reason specified by law in order to cast an absentee ballot. For some of the same reasons, I would also support an amendment to the State Constitution permitting early voting.

As a result of voting by absentee ballot last November, necessitated by the pandemic and due to my age (67) and that of my spouse (80), I have become more aware of how a health condition can affect the ability to vote in person. Because of two unexpected illnesses my husband experienced over the past two years, I realized in hindsight that if the timing had been different and if not for the temporary changes in voting due to Covid19, we might have had the extra burden of having to request an absentee application to deliver to our town clerk within 6 days of the election. Imagining what that might have been like compared to the ease last fall of automatically receiving the application from the state has prompted me to write this letter. Considering this further, I also imagined how voting early might have alleviated any concern over unanticipated occurrences.

During this time of social isolation, I have thought back to families I've worked with both as a teacher in Torrington and prior to that as a public health nurse in Bridgeport. I've remembered parents working two, sometimes three jobs without the time to spare for parent-teacher conferences unless I (gladly) accommodated their schedules. There was the single woman I used to visit in Bridgeport caring for elderly parents, unable to leave them alone without depending on the kindness of a neighbor to spell her as needed. Yes, part of my involvement with families in similar situations might have been to provide that support, but how many similar situations are unsupported? Then in 2018, a friend's college-age daughter mailed in her absentee ballot from a distant college. Because of our work on the election, there was the dawning realization that this young person's first vote, an absentee ballot, had not arrived on time. Her ballot was sent in plenty of time, however did postal delays affect the delivery or possibly other reasons not the fault of this young woman? Her mother chose not to let her know, feeling it would have had a negative effect on her excitement and pride at participating in her first election.

What if absentee ballots and early voting became the norm in our country and was done fairly and without complicated procedures to slow down the process or frustrate the voter? And yes, over the past few years I've become increasingly aware of the various other ways voters can feel disenfranchised by restrictive state election laws, way beyond what I've addressed in this testimony. How voting or the lack thereof can affect a person's participation in our democracy and ultimately his or her right to be heard is a very important consideration indeed!