

February 22nd, 2021

Dear members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee:

My name is *Tracey Madden-Hennessey*, I am a voter from *Bristol* however, I am the Executive Director of the *YWCA New Britain*. The Board of my organization recently approved our support of legislation ensuring increased voting access. Passing both **HJ 58**, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to **Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting**; and **HJ 59**, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to **Permit Early Voting** are extremely important to us. The recent election demonstrated the effectiveness of increasing voter access. In the New Britain community, in which residents may not have easy access to transportation or their polling place; may work multiple jobs and have difficulty, getting to polling places during hours of operation; increasing access is critical to ensuring residents have their voice heard.

43 states offer in person early voting options, including 6 states with all-mail elections. Connecticut lags behind most of the nation. Many voters work 2 or 3 jobs just to keep their families afloat and need more options than just a single day to get time off for voting. Recent polling says nearly 80% of Connecticut voters support early voting.

More than 650,000 voters voted securely by absentee ballot in the 2020 CT General Election—which means they voted early on their own schedules. Connecticut's record breaking 80% voter turnout in the 2020 General Election was thanks to absentee ballot voting. Furthermore, 73% of Connecticut voters support giving all voters the option to vote by absentee ballot without needing an excuse.

While HJ 59 (Early Voting) only needs a 50% majority vote in favor, both the House and Senate must pass HJ 58 (No-Excuse Absentee Voting) with at least a 75% supermajority this legislative session—in which case this proposal would also appear before voters as a ballot question in the 2022 statewide election. Let's get it done this session!

The choice is clear. Please choose democracy and pass HJ 58 and HJ 59.

Thank you,

Tracey Madden-Hennessey
Executive Director
YWCA New Britain