

To the Connecticut GAE Committee:

I am Matthew Meyers, a resident of District 36. I have lived in Connecticut since before I turned two years old. It has been my home since I can remember, and I now attend university here. Just as my Connecticut roots are a defining part of who I am, so too is political life. I made voter guides for local elections, intently followed the swings in political races, and poured over the history of government. Unfortunately, this obsession has awoken me to the fact that the political system fails in many ways to deliver policy outcomes to help people and meaningfully represent them. I'm sure that as representatives yourself, you are aware of this more than anyone. There are many reasons for this failure, and the CT General Assembly is not going to completely fix American politics, but there is a long-overdue measure that the state can adopt to make an enormous difference: making it easier to vote by allowing no-excuse absentee ballots and early voting, which you can do by passing HJ 58 and HJ 59.

Connecticut adopted a provisional absentee ballot system for the 2020 election by allowing all people to use COVID as a reason for requesting an absentee ballot. This was a necessary measure to make it possible for people to vote in the pandemic, but it also gave us a glimpse of the possibilities that giving everyone access to absentee ballots could have. In spite of the pandemic, voter turnout increased to 71.9% from 64.9% in 2016, a trend mirrored across the country among states that adopted early voting for the first time. This was in spite of an early and absentee voting system that was mediocre at best in comparison to the rest of the country, as evidenced by Brookings Institution giving Connecticut a C grade for its vote by mail system with a score in the 32nd percentile of states. By building on the strides that the state was forced to adopt this year, Connecticut can make democracy accessible to even more people.

Low voter turnout in America is not necessarily the result of a large chunk of the population systematically not voting. Rather, it is the result of most Americans voting only sporadically, either when they feel particularly strongly or when it is particularly convenient. These two amendments directly address convenience. Depending on the length of the line, voting can take up to several hours. This is a luxury that many hard-working citizens with long workdays simply do not have. People may also have random conflicts on Election Day. With Early and Absentee Voting, people can prepare in advance for these challenges, or may even vote spontaneously when it is convenient.

Early Voting and Absentee voting are also extremely safe. Early voting follows the same procedures as Election Day voting, so we can trust it as much as we trust our election day vote totals. For Absentee voting, the state uses secure drop boxes that only approved officials can access. We are further protected by our paper ballots in sealed envelopes. Exhaustive studies of mail-in voting fraud have concluded that there are very low rates of malfeasance. For example, a Heritage Foundation's database has found that only 0.00006 percent of total votes cast in the past 20 years have been cases of mail-in voter fraud.

Beyond the technical policy details of increasing turnout, these amendments would send a powerful signal to the country in favor of democracy when democracy is in a time of need. Our

system of government is being questioned and delegitimized from all sides, and people often point to the clear instances of government apathy and inaction about citizen participation as evidence that leaders don't care about the input of their constituents. But this crisis has provided us a moment of clarity about politics, and it is your responsibility to seize this moment for the better. Early voting and no-excuse absentee ballots are not a cure-all, but they will make a sizable difference for so many who are unable to vote right now, and by passing HJ 58 and HJ 59 you can make this difference.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Meyers  
6 Grant Avenue  
Old Greenwich, CT 06870