

February 18, 2021

TO: gaetestimony@cga.ct.gov

RE: Testimony for 2/22/21 public hearing in SUPPORT of bill HJ 58 for Absentee Voting and HJ 59 for Early Voting.

Dear Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Sarah Roy. I am a resident of Fairfield and I am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut bill HJ 58 for Absentee Voting and HJ 59 for Early Voting.

Expanding absentee/mail-in voting by not requiring an excuse makes voting more accessible to all eligible voters, particularly minority voters, voters with disabilities, those in rural communities, and more. It also reduces the cost of elections. Fewer voters on Election Day would ease the burden on elections officials because there are likely to be fewer machine breakdowns, fewer misdirected voters in need of attention, etc. Instead, the work of election officials before and after Election Day would increase somewhat, but such increase would be spread over a longer period of time where there is not as much stress on one day. The net impact on election officials under a no-excuse absentee voting system is likely to be a reduction in the administrative burden, with the potential for a decrease in the total cost of administering elections.

Regarding the possibility of voter fraud, best practices already exist for states using systems such as absentee/mail-in balloting and incidents of fraud associated with systems using best practices are rare. In addition to procedural safeguards to secure their voting processes, various states have enacted laws that carry serious penalties to disincentivize illegal behavior. These laws, along with active voter education, are key to ensuring that all voters have access to a fair process and are protected from undue influence, interference, or intimidation.

In terms of early voting, given more opportunities to vote generally leads to higher levels of voter participation, which is vital to a healthy democracy. As Americans' lives become more complex — for many each day is a struggle to balance the needs of work and family — confining voting to a single 8- or 12-hour period is simply not reflective of how most voters live. Additionally, having polls open for such a short time can lead to numerous problems, including long lines, as poll workers — who perform the job infrequently at best — struggle to cope with hordes of voters. According to the Brennan Center, research shows the key benefits of early in person voting are:

1. Reduced stress on the voting system on Election Day;
2. Shorter lines on Election Day;
3. Improved poll worker performance;
4. Early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches; and
5. Greater access to voting and increased voter satisfaction.

Those who choose to vote early or by mail should not only be given that opportunity during a pandemic, but also have that opportunity every year. I strongly support HJ 58 and HJ 59 and urge you to support them as well.

Sincerely,

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