



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 6464, Senate Bill 901, House Joint 58, and House Joint 59**

Good Afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Committee. District 1199 represents over 26,000 healthcare workers across the state in a variety of settings, from PCA's who deliver care in home, to CNA's and other staff in Nursing Homes across Connecticut, to direct care workers in state run services and group homes, We are submitting testimony today in support of House Bill 6464, Senate Bill 901, House Joint 58, and House Joint 59.

Samuel Adams wrote (in "The Boston Gazette" on April 16, 1781): "Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please an individual – or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country."

Voting is a right that Americans have had to fight for; a struggle that goes back all the way to the early colonial period when settlers were subjects of the British Empire. Keeping consistent with British law of the time, only adult white men who owned land were allowed to vote. In 1776 the United States declared independence, and in the next decade or so the property ownership requirement was lifted, extending voting rights to any white men paying taxes. Yet, Catholics, Jews, and Quakers still could not vote. Free black men were only allowed to vote in three states. Some states explicitly barred women, native Americans, and other minorities from voting. The Three-Fifths Compromise of 1787 allowed 3/5 of the Black population to count towards a states representation, yet Blacks did not actually have the right to vote. Over the course of a Century there were victories and losses and the voting rights were expanded or restricted state by state.

Blacks and other minorities would not be granted the right to vote until 1870 with the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provides that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

Yet that privilege was not extended to Black women. Or any women. Women would not be granted the right to vote until 1920 with the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provides that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

As Blacks and other minorities were granted the legal right to vote, Southern states enacted Jim Crow Laws. Legislation designed to make it more difficult for Blacks to vote. Property ownership requirements were reinstated. Poll taxes were established. Literacy and character tests were established. All to discriminate against blacks. Grandfather clauses were also established to extend voting rights to whites who would otherwise be filtered out by Jim Crow Laws. It wasn't until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that Jim Crow Laws (and Grandfather Clauses) were made illegal.

Even to this day, however, our opponents continue to find new and inventive ways to suppress voting. Even as recently as the past five or six years we have seen certain states make it harder for their residents to register to vote. New Hampshire introduced registration rules requiring people to provide proof of residency. Tennessee passed laws to make voter registration drives illegal. And Georgia enacted an "exact-match" law requiring information in voter registrations to match exactly with state records. 53,000 voter registrations, predominantly belonging to Black voters, were denied because of minor mismatches involving spaces, hyphens, apostrophes, et. al. Georgia also purged its voter rolls, effectively requiring 87,000 voters to re-register.

Several states have reduced the number of polling locations, especially in areas where Black, minorities, and otherwise low-income communities are adversely affected. 214 voting precincts were closed in Georgia. Voters who can afford the time and transportation to go to their newly allocated polling locations have had to wait up 11 hours! Some states, like Texas, have implemented measures to restrict voting by mail. And other states, like North Carolina and Ohio introduced restrictions to early voting right before elections.

Of course, we are all familiar with the deliberate and unabashed attacks on the United States Postal Service in the middle of a pandemic. A new postmaster general was appointed six months before a presidential election. Then postal worker hours were slashed, blue mail collection boxes were removed, and hundreds of mail sorting machines were destroyed. All while the former president undermined trust in the mail-in ballot system. Certain states set up rules that counting of mail-in ballots could not begin until election day. The president prematurely declared himself winner of the 2020 Presidential Election the morning after election day and called to have any further counting of mail-in ballots stopped.

Elections should be free and fair. Voting should be encouraged. It should be easy. And it brings us great pride that Connecticut is far ahead the rest of the United States in this regard. Passing House Bill 6464, Senate Bill 901, House Joint 58, and House Joint 59 into law would go a long way. I ask you to please support these bills, in doing so helping to secure the future of freedom and democracy in this nation. Thank you for your time.