



Written Testimony of

Bishop John Selders

Co-Founder of Moral Monday CT

Before The Government Administration and Elections Committee Listening Session

On Legislation

HJ 58, Proposed Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting

and

HJ 59, Proposed Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting

February 21, 2021

Good Day State Senator Flexer and State Representative Fox and members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee. My name is John Selders, Pastor of Amistad United Church of Christ, Hartford, CT and Co-Founder of Moral Monday CT, a statewide group of persons of faith and conscious doing our work at the intersection of social justice and the Movement for Black Lives.

I along with many of my colleagues with Moral Monday CT support the 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.

43 other states offer in person early voting options, including 6 states with all-mail elections. And yet, Connecticut lags behind most of the nation on this important expression of democracy. Many voters work 2 or 3 jobs just to keep their families afloat and need more options than just a single day of taking time off to get to the polls. Recent public opinion poll of Connecticut voters conducted by Secure Democracy said that 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 us get it done this session!

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

We believe it is time to comes to terms with what many of us have being advocating for from across this state. We have this moment, right now, to forward something new. Let us do it, together.

Thank you for your consideration.