

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, ranking members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco and distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am writing to you in support of HJ58 and HJ59, the resolutions proposing constitutional amendments to give all voters the option to vote absentee and to allow for early voting in Connecticut.

I am the Alder for the 21st ward in New Haven and an advocate with Voter Choice CT for voting reforms to strengthen our democracy. I have seen firsthand how popular voting absentee has been in New Haven during the pandemic. The drop boxes in particular were very well-utilized. Given the ongoing nature of the pandemic, it is vital for every voter to be given the right to vote by absentee as a matter of public health. Even in the absence of a public health emergency, voters should have the option to vote absentee without stringent requirements in order to make voting accessible to all voters.

In New Haven, the City Clerk held multiple days of in-person absentee ballot processing, which is effectively early voting as absentee ballot applications are processed and voters receive, complete, and return their ballots on the spot. This option was wildly popular in the weekends before election day. It shows the demand for early voting for those concerned about health risks, issues with the postal service (which I myself experienced), or other concerns, such as employment or other obligations on election day. Similar to absentee voting, early voting will make voting easier, safer, and more accessible for all voters, in particular elderly, working class, and disabled voters.

Connecticut has much work to do to make voting more accessible and to strengthen our democracy. In addition to supporting these resolutions, the Government Administration and Elections committee should explore reforms such as ranked choice voting for making our democracy more fair and representative.

Thank you for your consideration,

Steven Winter

New Haven