

**Testimony Submitted to the
Government Administration and Election
Committee Public Hearing
February 22, 2021
By: Katherine S. Yacavone**

Honorable members of the GAE Committee, please accept this testimony in support of House Joint Resolution No. 58 (HJ 58) ***Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting*** and in support of House Joint Resolution No. 59 (HJ 59) ***Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting***.

Voting is a right guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution and the State Constitution. However, all too often, individuals express the view that “*My vote does not count*”. The events of 2020 have clearly demonstrated that every U.S. eligible voter has the power to shape the democracy in which we live. As residents of the State of Georgia have shown over the past several months, each and every vote does count and can change the political course of a state and a nation.

Connecticut experienced record voter turnout in the November 2020 election. The changes enacted by our State leaders to ensure voters could exercise their right in the midst of a pandemic, demonstrate how successfully the electoral process worked. This high voter turnout reflects that Connecticut residents were engaged in the Presidential campaign narratives and the myriad of health/social justice issues that were embedded therein.

How does the CT electorate remain engaged at the local, state and national level so that each person will continue to believe their vote matters and that their voice should be heard? As one who has been active in grass-roots politics on the local level in several Connecticut communities for decades, I know that if individuals perceive an issue affects them directly, then they tend to be engaged and, potentially, vote. In my view, it is the responsibility of the State to amend its Constitution to remove any possible barriers to the casting of ballots. The November election showed that tens of thousands of Connecticut residents used the COVID Absentee ballot option to vote. As infrastructure changes have been established to process this type of voting, and in the volume of absentee ballots cast in November 2020, adopting House Joint Resolution #59 should not pose

further administrative burden on the Secretary of State's Office and will serve to increase voter turnout. Adoption of HJ#58 will remove obstacles to voting by offering an extended period of time during which votes can be cast; not just between 6:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of November. Early voting has been in place in several states for years and CT should adopt this regulation.

In the U.S., voter suppression efforts are still wide-spread in several states. Efforts to disenfranchise eligible voters, particularly Non-White persons, must be called out and squelched. It is important for CT residents to see that Legislators will take action to eliminate any and all obstacles to voters casting ballots. CT should join the States that support and protect the sacred right to vote by adoption of HJ #58 and #59.

Thank you for your consideration.

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