



**State of Connecticut  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103

*Promoting Equality and Justice for all People*

**Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing  
March 24, 2021**

**CHRO Testimony Regarding:**

**SJ 13 – Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow Sixteen-Year-Olds Preregister to Vote, Regional Voting Centers and Early Voting**

**SB 1073 – AAC Equity and Opportunity in State Government**

**HB 6211 – AAC Gender and Racial Diversity on Certain State Appointive Boards, Commissions, Committees and Councils and an Online System for Consideration of Appointments Within the Legislative Department**

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the chance to submit testimony in support of SJ 13, SB 1073, and HB 6211.

The Commission supports SJ 13, Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow Sixteen-Year-Olds to Preregister to Vote, Regional Voting Centers and Early Voting. As the state’s civil rights agency, we are concerned that every voter, regardless of their protected class or socioeconomic status, can have a voice at the ballot box. According to a recent poll Black voters were most likely to vote early in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Connecticut should not perpetuate a system where only certain people have a voice. Unnecessary barriers perpetuate voter suppression. We should eliminate obstacles to voting through any means possible. Early voting allows people to vote without taking time off from work or obtaining childcare. Early voting is also helpful for people with disabilities who might not be able to easily access polling sites on Election Day. The CHRO supports adding the law to increase access to the ballot. Allowing early voting is one step towards ending voter suppression.

The Commission also supports SB 1073, which directs the Department of Administration (DAS) to work with CHRO, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and state agencies to study methods for assessing whether state agency policies create or exacerbate barriers for full and equal participation in state services for all individuals. It then requires agencies to assess equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability, and to make sure that underserved communities are able to access state services and programs. As the state entity that enforces the state’s antidiscrimination laws and aims to eliminate

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<sup>1</sup> [A Record Number Of Black Americans Could Vote Early This Year | FiveThirtyEight](#)

discrimination while promoting equity, the Commission has worked to dismantle historic barriers to access and looks forward to working with DAS and OPM on this important study.

The State of Connecticut offers many programs and services to its residents; however, if it does not assess whether there are barriers that prohibit some groups from accessing those services, there cannot be equity. While there may not be intent to exclude individuals or groups, if we do not look for any unintended consequences, we will never see and correct them. If Connecticut is going to address and eliminate our history of racism, we must assess whether current activities maintain these historical and structural barriers that disenfranchise many of our residents.

CHRO does have a concern, however, regarding the limits of the study to the protected classes set forth above and recommends that all protected classes, including but not limited to age, veteran status, color, ancestry and the other protected classes that are covered by the State's anti-discrimination statutes are covered by this study as well.

Finally, the Commission supports HB 6211, which aims to increase the gender and racial diversity of state appointive boards, commissions, committees and councils. A crucial part of any state effort to ensure that the viewpoints of all Connecticut residents are represented in policy and decision making must be a good faith effort to include people from a variety of gender and racial backgrounds.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony today and thanks the GAE Committee for its attention to these important issues.