



July 21, 2020  
Testimony of AARP Connecticut  
Government Administrations and Elections Committee  
Listening Session Re: LCO 3576 Absentee Ballots

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 38 million nationwide, and nearly 600,000 members here in Connecticut. We fight for issues that matter most to older adults and their families such as healthcare, family caregiving, and retirement security, and civic engagement.

AARP appreciates the actions Governor Lamont took by executive order to postpone Connecticut's primary to August 11<sup>th</sup> as well as allowing an expanded use of absentee voting for that primary. We believe however that Connecticut should take action now to ensure that all registered voters can cast their ballots safely in the November elections as well.

For nearly 40 years, the turnout of voters over the age of 45 has significantly outpaced that of younger Americans. For example, according to U.S. Census Bureau data for the 2016 presidential election, 71 percent of Americans over the age of 65 voted. That's compared with just 46 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds. Moreover, people over the age of 65 show up to the polls far more than any other age group.

However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that people over 65 years of age, and those with serious health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease seem to be at highest risk for severe disease and even death from COVID-19 related illness.

In order to protect Connecticut voters, election officials, and volunteers who staff polling locations, many of whom are retirees, we believe Connecticut should now develop alternative means for a voter to cast their ballot in November. Older residents should not have to risk their

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lives or their health to exercise their right to vote. Specifically, AARP is recommending that Connecticut:

- Remove the requirement that an excuse be provided to utilize an absentee ballot – the need to avoid crowds and lines during this crisis should be reason enough to request an absentee ballot.
- Take whatever steps are necessary to enable the state to send an absentee ballot applications to all registered voters in the state. This would be especially useful for those in long-term care centers, medical facilities, or quarantined due to the virus.

These are challenging times for all of Connecticut's residents. As residents look toward our elected officials for leadership, we at AARP look forward to working with you to ensure that the largest voting bloc in our population, the 50+ voter, can continue to have a safe and secure way to exercise their right to vote during this unprecedented time.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this issue of great importance to our state's voters.

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