

Testimony in SUPPORT of Absentee Ballot Expansion

To: GAETestimony@cga.ct.gov

Subject: Expand Absentee Ballot Voting for the November Election

Dear Members of the Government and Administrations Election Committee.

As of today, July 20, 2020, there are over 4406 deaths in CT from Covid-19. I, and many CT voters I know are concerned about contracting or spreading Covid-19 by voting in person this coming November. It is time to step up and take some real action to protect the health and safety of our CT voters and to protect the integrity of our democracy. Remember too: 24% of CT citizens are people of color - 3x as many get COVID - 6x as many die from COVID.

While adding a one-time COVID-19 excuse to vote absentee (ONLY) for the 2020 general election, the draft bill still restricts voting rights beyond the language of Connecticut's state constitution. I am respectfully requesting that you use this opportunity that you have to **align state statute with the state constitution to ensure voting rights are secured, not just now but in the future**. Beyond the November general election, the draft bill would allow voters to get absentee ballots because of "such elector's or person's illness." If we remove these four words -- "such elector's or person's" - - from the draft bill regarding absentee ballot voting, it will ensure that as long as the pandemic remains in America eligible Connecticut voters will have access to voting rights -- including any possible special elections early in 2021. Future legislatures should not have to continue to come back in for special sessions to protect voting rights.

ALL CT voters must have the option to vote by absentee ballot for the November elections. I have a medical problem so I can vote by AB but my husband does not. As things stand now, my husband would be required to vote in person, which could put him at risk of contracting Covid, even if he wears a mask etc. He could then bring it home and put our entire family at risk. Nowhere in the Constitution does it say you have to choose between your life and your right to vote. Now is NOT the time for partisan politics, nor to waste time. **Align the state statute with the state constitution to ensure voting rights are secured now and in the future.**

Additionally, please make sure that Absentee ballots are mailed out to all registered CT voters in the fall along with a stamped return envelope. Given the recent changes made by the new postmaster general in hopes of disenfranchising voters, please include a clause which stipulates that Absentee ballot applications and Absentee ballots get prioritized by the CT USPS. I would also request an Election Monitor for Bridgeport. Hartford has one, and it has been quite effective.

Finally, for anyone who is worried about fraud, there are MANY precautions which are in place to prevent this. According to the League of Women Voters - a non-partisan organization, "In Connecticut, voting by mail using an absentee ballot is overwhelmingly safe and secure. There are numerous checks and balances in our absentee ballot process. First, a voter must fill out an

application to receive an absentee ballot. Once an application has been received by the Town Clerk (who oversees the absentee ballot process in each city or town) the application is reviewed to make sure that the applicant is indeed an active registered voter in that municipality. If there is any question about the application, the Town Clerk confers with the Registrars of Voters to verify the voter's information. Once confirmed, the application is given a number that can be matched later to a returned absentee ballot. Only a verified applicant will receive an absentee ballot mailed to the address specified by the voter." Sending all of the CT registered voters an absentee ballot application also helps to keep the voter rolls up to date.

No one should ever have to choose between their constitutional right to vote and their life. You have the chance to make this right not just for the November election, but for the future as well. The future of our democracy is in your hands.

Thank you.

Alisa Trachtenberg
Ridgefield, CT