

Dear Members of the GAE Committee

I appreciate your efforts in drafting a bill to address absentee voting during this pandemic. I am disappointed, however, that you have not taken this opportunity to correct the error of past legislation. You continue to word the statute in a manner that is stricter than what is required by the State's constitution.

I am requesting that you align the state statute with the state constitution to ensure voting rights are secured, not just now, but in the future. As drafted, the bill would allow voters to obtain absentee ballots because of "such elector's or person's illness." I strongly believe that you should remove these four words -- "such elector's or person's" -- from the draft bill and reference only "illness". The state constitution uses the word "sickness" without any reference to "his or her" (the current statute) or "such elector's or person's" (the draft bill). Further, the draft bill does not protect the safety of voters beyond the November 2020 election even if the pandemic remains a threat into 2021, as the experts are predicting.

Legislators should not have to come back for further special sessions to protect absentee voting rights during this pandemic. Nor should any future pandemic require further legislative action to allow for absentee voting.

Let's learn the lesson of this pandemic. To keep all of us safe, we need to stay apart as much as possible. You, me and the rest of Connecticut's population.

Gail Berritt
Westport
July 20, 2020