

7/20/2020

Dear Co-Chairs Flexer and Fox, Vice-Chairs Haskell and Winkler, Ranking Members Sampson and France, and members of the GAE Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of expanding absentee voting with suggested changes to **LCO 3576**. My name is Karen Edwards, MD, MPH. I live in Stamford and am a member of Indivisible Stamford. I am a parent, a retired pediatrician and public health professional, and the daughter of a disabled veteran (World War II).

In America, the right to vote is a fundamental freedom. We need to uphold the freedom to vote for every eligible American citizen, while allowing citizens to eliminate the risk of Covid-19 infection that is inherent in in-person voting.

I support expanding absentee voting in general and especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, based on my sincere belief that voting should be easier and as risk-free as possible for every eligible voter, and especially for those who have additional challenges in getting to the polls or are at high risk of infection during in-person voting, such as seniors, disabled veterans and other people with disabilities. In addition, without expanded access to absentee ballots, parents may be forced to choose between missing voting by staying at home with their homebound children and risking taking their children with them to vote.

The benefits of expanded absentee voting include:

- 1) Reduction of stress on the voting system on Election Day, which is especially important during the pandemic. This will facilitate social distancing and adherence to disinfection routines.
- 2) Voters can fulfill their voting right without fear of contracting Covid-19 at a polling place.
- 3) Parents, many of whom are combining work at home with child-care and education supervision activities, will be better able to exercise their voting right.

I strongly support these revisions to the draft bill LCO 3576:

- It should align with the state constitution
- It should include MORE than a one-time excuse to vote absentee in the 2020 general election; it should permit expanded absentee voting to extend beyond the 2020 general election so that future legislatures do not need to return for special sessions to protect voting rights.

Expanding absentee voting is an appropriate response to the complexity of life during the pandemic and into the coming years, which are likely to present us with challenges to fulfillment of our right to vote in ways we have not yet imagined.

I'd like to thank the Committee for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,
Karen Edwards MD MPH
Stamford, CT