

## **Government Administrations and Elections Committee**

### **Listening Session Re: LCO 3576 Absentee Ballots**

Dear Senator Mae Flexer, Representative Daniel Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

As voters, we should not have to risk our health in order to participate in our elections. COVID-19 is highly-contagious, and forcing voters to stand in long lines at polling places will put people at risk of catching and spreading this dangerous virus across our community. People of color and seniors have been especially impacted by COVID-19 — suffering from higher rates of infection, illness and even death.

Thank you to Governor Lamont for taking action to postpone Connecticut's Presidential preference primary to August 11<sup>th</sup> as well as allowing an expanded use of absentee voting. Connecticut must take action now to ensure that all registered voters can continue to cast their ballots safely throughout this crisis.

Allowing all voters the choice to vote-by-mail is an important step to protect public health. CT is only one of eighteen (18) states that require electors to provide an "excuse" to vote absentee and our state is one of only ten (10) states that require senior citizens to provide an "excuse" to vote absentee.

Thanks to our Town Council, my town of West Hartford approved a resolution recommending the General Assembly act to expand usage of absentee ballots. We need leaders who will stand up and take action to protect us, our public health, and our democracy. I urge passage of LCO 3576 with recommendation of extending the timeframe through 2021 as we continue to respond to this virus. Plus, the drop-off ballot boxes in every town should be retained for ballot drop-off beyond 2020. Expanded absentee ballots protects all voters regardless of party affiliation. Action by the General Assembly promptly can ensure that voters and municipalities can plan accordingly and rest easier that we may vote-by-mail from the safety of our homes.

Thank you for your attention to this issue of great importance to all of our voters.

Kate Farrar, West Hartford