

July 21, 2020

Before the Government Affairs & Elections Committee concerning LCO No. 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Voting at the 2020 State Election and Election Day Registration

Dear Members of the Government Affairs & Elections Committee,

I write in support of expanded access to the use of absentee ballot voting during the health crisis of the threat of COVID-19, a highly dangerous, infectious and transmissible disease.

For the past several months, government officials and residents of Connecticut have been responding to this public health crisis with great seriousness, earnestness and responsibility. Both government and residents are to be commended and because of our collective efforts, Connecticut has been successful in lowering the rate of infection and concomitant deleterious impacts.

However the threat of this disease is ongoing as we are regularly reminded.

This danger will continue during election day, both the primary August 11 and the general election of November 3.

Voters should not be asked to risk their health and safety in order to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Contrary to the on-record statements of some elected representatives here in Connecticut, governments SHOULD make it as easy as possible for citizens to exercise our right to vote rather than erecting or maintaining barriers to that right. Similarly, elected officials – again here in Connecticut- should not engage in fear mongering and incendiary tactics and words by suggesting that ballot collection boxes are intrinsically unsafe. Such boxes are similar to mail collection boxes in the laws that prohibit tampering. Further, states that have adopted vote by mail regularly use ballot collection boxes and these receptacles are widely accepted and respected as are the results of the vote by mail elections. It is incredibly disappointing that those elected to represent the citizens would themselves seek to impede and discredit the election and election officials.

In summary I fully support legislation to extend absentee voting to all otherwise qualified voters in the time of the pandemic. Again, voters should not have to choose between protecting our health and exercising our right to vote.

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