

**RE: LCO 3576 Absentee Ballots**

**July 21, 2020**

Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Vice Chair Haskell, Vice Chair Winkler, Ranking Member Sampson and Ranking Member France:

**I am writing to urge you to act favorably on LCO 3576: AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING AT THE 2020 STATE ELECTION AND ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION.**

All of us should be able to request an absentee ballot for the November 2020 election if we do not want to risk our health by voting in person. Voting is a cornerstone of our democracy and it is our duty to ensure that every individual is able to safely exercise their right to vote. I am proud that, despite being a minority member, I was able to craft a voting rights resolution that the Coventry Town Council passed unanimously, calling on our state legislators to provide expanded access to ballots during a health crisis. Clearly, this should be a non-partisan issue.

I believe you must go further and make permanent changes to align state statute with our state constitution. While adding a one-time COVID-19 excuse to vote absentee for the 2020 general election, the draft bill still restricts voting rights beyond the language of Connecticut's state constitution. I urge you to remove the words "such elector's or person's" from the draft bill section 1A(3) in order to ensure that as long as the pandemic remains in America, and during any future health threats, eligible Connecticut voters will have full access to voting rights – including any possible special elections early in 2021. All indications are that COVID-19 will surge again. Future legislatures should not have to spend precious time re-visiting this issue, potentially disenfranchising numerous voters before a decision can be made. This will also avoid confusion in future elections after people are able to use "illness" in its broad sense during 2020. There must be consistency and reliability in this important protection of our right to vote.

I urge passage of this bill, with the words "such elector's or person's" deleted from section 1A(3). This is the only way to make sure that there is fair and full voting now and in the future during a health crisis.

Respectfully,

Lisa Thomas  
Coventry, CT