



NASW

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Testimony on AAC Absentee Voting At The 2020 State Election
and Election Day Registration

Government Administration and Elections Committee

July 21, 2020

Submitted By: Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter representing over 2,400 members, we support AAC Absentee Voting At The State Elections and Election Day Registration.

Voting is the most important civic duty of our state's residents. Participating in who will represent you at the state and federal level is what makes this nation a democracy. Any restrictions on this right to vote is unacceptable. Yet Connecticut has the most limited absentee ballot access of any state. Because not all voters meet the narrow reasons for acquiring an absentee ballot, every election eligible voter's find themselves unable to vote. That was before Covid-19. Circumstances have dramatically changed so what was not a defensible absentee ballot process in the past is now an anti-democratic process.

No one should have to make the decision between risking their life to vote or not voting. Voters age 65 or older or those with underlying health conditions are being told to stay home. That is good advice but in offering such directives the State must offer such voters a mail in option for voting by absentee ballot. Likewise, persons who are Covid-19 positive but asymptomatic should not be encouraged to go to the polls, due to no other option, where they may infect others.

All indications are that Covid-19 will surge again in our state and health care experts warn of a certain second viral wave. Even if one is optimistic that the circumstances of Covid-19 may improve, no one knows what will happen in November. The state cannot wait to the fall to decide if conditions are safe for all voters to come to the polls. A decision must be made now too allow time for implementation, and that decision needs to be increasing access to absentee ballots by including the Covid-19 virus as a reason to vote absentee.

CT is already preparing to allow absentee balloting in the 2020 primaries, setting precedence for the 2020 general elections. This is the only way to assure the opportunity for fair and full voting for all registered voters.

We urge passage of this bill for 2020 as a stop gap measure until permanent changes can be adopted.