

**Testimony in support of  
LCO 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Ballots with additional amendments.**

July 21, 2020

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Flexer and Rep. Fox, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

I am a leader of Make Voting Easy, a group of CT citizens working on Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting to make voting more accessible to all eligible voters. I am a CT resident for over 35 years and a retired CT teacher, Speech-Language Pathologist.

I am testifying in **support of LCO 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Ballots**, to provide all eligible voters with the choice to vote by absentee ballot, due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

I commend all of you for your hard work on this bill along with Sec. Merrill and Gov. Lamont. I applaud Gov. Lamont for his Executive Order 7QQ to allow COVID 19 to be a reason to vote by absentee ballot for the August primary. This will protect our democracy and our constitutional right to vote safely, especially during this global pandemic. We need this right to be codified into law for all elections.

We should not have to choose between contracting COVID 19, a severe illness with lasting consequences even death, and exercising our constitutional right to vote and participate in our democracy.

We are all at risk of contracting this deadly virus, and even if we are well, no matter our age, we cannot take the risk of contracting and spreading the virus to our families and communities, especially if we are forced to stand in long lines and vote indoors in Nov. and going forward into the Special Elections in 2021.

CT citizens have made so many sacrifices during this pandemic. Please do not force them to sacrifice their lives in order to vote. Please pass a comprehensive bill that would amend and remove the language "such elector's or person's illness" from the draft bill so that fear of contracting COVID 19 will be a reason to vote by absentee ballot and will protect voters in the event of any Special Elections in 2021, because this pandemic is likely to be with us for a long time and will continue to be a threat to our health and our lives.

We are all testifying virtually today, because of COVID 19, we must be able to vote by absentee ballot because of COVID 19. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify safely because this is what's making our democracy strong, but we also need to allow every single eligible voter, no matter their health status or their age, to cast a No-Excuse Absentee Ballot and especially now in this COVID-19 pandemic.

**Although I support the concept of this bill, it needs to include much more to be a comprehensive voting rights bill.** Please consider all the tremendous and heartfelt testimonies from so many people representing so many organizations, which have given you so many important ways to make this bill inclusive of every community in CT.

**Please add more voting access to this bill and amending it as follows:**

-Provide no-excuse absentee voting for all elections, but most importantly the statutes needs to be amended so that the language clearly states that fear of contracting and spreading COVID

COVID 19 to our families and communities is defined as a reason to vote by absentee ballot, not just sickness suggesting that you must be sick with COVID 19 to have an absentee ballot.

- Include funding for and implementation of election monitors, especially in Bridgeport to secure our elections.

- End voter purging for not voting in past elections. Just because a person doesn't vote for years should not force them to be purged from the voter files and have to register again. I applaud registration when you get a new driver's license.

- Place absentee ballot drop boxes outside the Town Halls with 24/7 access for voters to leave their ballots safely, and help towns to arrange that the ballots are retrieved several times daily and after hours. In addition, place police or guards overnight to protect the drop boxes from vandalism.

- Ensure that absentee ballots are counted if post marked on Election Day.

- Ensure voters that if they are already in line at 8pm on Election Day they may still cast their votes, since COVID 19 cleaning precautions and social distancing will most likely slow down the voting process. This should also be codified into law for all future elections, as it is the only fair way to allow all eligible voters who have taken the time to wait patiently in line to be allowed to vote in all elections.

- Provide safe voting from home and private voting for people with disabilities, including those who are visually impaired, as they may not wish to vote in person for their own safety.

In addition, please implement Sec. Merrill's Early Voting initiative and pass Early Voting for CT this year with a 75% supermajority vote in the CT House and CT Senate. It is time to come together for our safety.

We know that the COVID 19 will be with us for the long term and voters and citizens need to be prepared to vote safely by absentee ballot in the future. We must protect you, our legislators, and your legislative aids and staffs from needing to meet in person. We support and commend you on arranging and using new technologies to keep yourselves safe as you continue to work and vote to represent your constituents and all CT citizens, during these challenging times.

We need to make sure, especially in this election, which is going to be the most important election of our lives, that our elections are safe and secure. Elections must not be the cause of our state to go into another big COVID 19 surge and overwhelm our healthcare system right in the middle of flu season, which can make matters worse.

I am very grateful to all of you, who have been invested in this process, and I know that you have been working really hard to make voting accessible to every single eligible voter in Connecticut as you drafted bill LCO 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Ballots. I urge you to add the amended language and to vote for no-excuse absentee voting for the Nov. 2020 election and beyond to keep us all safe.

Please, all of you, stay safe and well - we need you. Thank you for your service.

Respectfully,  
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