

Dear legislators,

My name is Samantha Mashaw and I am a registered voter in New Haven, Connecticut. I am writing to express my conviction that absentee voting for all in the upcoming 2020 elections is a moral and public health imperative as a result of COVID-19.

I believe absentee voting should always be allowed, and/or that Election Day should be a state holiday, but this year in particular that **barriers to voting posed by the COVID-19 pandemic make it essential that voters be provided with absentee ballots in order to safely engage in the democratic process.** Maintaining social distancing and hygienic conditions at polling places will be a cumbersome and time-costly affair; on top of their usual duties, polling volunteers would need to enforce social distancing measures and clean booths between each voter.

Furthermore, insisting that voters appear in-person to cast their ballot puts voters who immunocompromised in the untenable position of risking their health in order to vote, or being denied their voting rights if they prioritize their safety.

COVID-19 has also resulted in unprecedented stress for parents in terms of caring for children. Carving out the time to visit the polls on top of work and childcare in this unprecedented time poses an unreasonable and unnecessary barrier to parents' civic engagement.

The stakes have never been higher for our country, and taking this step to ensure that every voter in Connecticut is able to cast their vote is absolutely essential.

Thank you,

Sam Mashaw