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### **Testimony Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee**

My name is Shanon McCormick and I am the parent of a 22-year-old young man who lives with Down syndrome, as well as the executive director of the Down Syndrome Association of Connecticut (DS ACT), a statewide organization operating on behalf of individuals in Connecticut who have Down syndrome.

On behalf of my family and the many others that my organization represents, I wish to voice my support for assuring that residents of Connecticut have the option to vote safely by absentee ballot in November. 50,000 adults in Connecticut are Individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. It is estimated that they are up to four times more likely to contract COVID-19 when exposed, and twice as likely to die from it. Current absentee ballot criteria do not allow them to request an absentee ballot because they fear voting in person is too risky.

My own son takes the privilege of voting very seriously. He follows the news and we spend weeks before each election reviewing issues, exploring pros and cons and discussing the kind of world he wants to live in so that he makes fully informed choices (sometimes not the choices I would make!). He goes to our voting place proudly at each election to cast his ballot. I know that there are many, many other individuals with I/DD who embrace voting with the same level of responsibility.

Most of the families my organization represents have spent months in near complete lockdown, because of the heightened risk COVID-19 presents to their loved ones. Should a second wave occur in the fall, they would have no choice but to return to near total isolation in order to protect themselves. Connecticut law as currently written would force them to risk their lives and the lives of their loved ones with disabilities in order to exercise their right to vote. That is an untenable situation.

I ask that the State of Connecticut take the following steps to assure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families have the same ability to exercise their right to vote as other citizens in the state:

- Allow all voters who wish to vote by absentee ballot to do so, as is the case in many other states.
- Make voter registration easier and more accessible to individuals with disabilities by adding voter registration links to all state agency websites, including DDS, DSS and DADS.

- Allow all registered voters to request absentee ballots electronically so that those who are concerned about safety from COVID-19 may make their request without leaving their homes.

Thank you for your consideration.