

Testimony of Stephanie Thomas
Norwalk Resident
LCO 3576 An Act Concerning Absentee Voting
July 21, 2020

Legislative leaders, my name is Stephanie Thomas and I am testifying regarding LCO 3576 regarding absentee voting.

Our very way of life, in Connecticut and across the nation, has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we all differ in how we have adjusted to this new reality and we vary in our opinion on how serious this virus is to our own health, one thing has been constant and universal - there is no end in sight and we should expect and prepare for COVID-19 to be with us for months and potentially years to come.

Just as businesses are dreaming up new models for economic survival and the education system has learned ways to handle remote learning, our voting system will have to adjust as well. It is only logical that Connecticut does what most other states – led by both Republicans and Democrats – already do. We should allow all eligible residents to vote absentee and make it as easy as possible to cast ballots. It's the best way to safeguard public health and ensure that the virus won't impede Connecticut's democracy. Dozens of states nationwide have acted already.

This is also our time to look ahead and plan for the future. This pandemic has hopefully taught us all that systems, no matter how tried and true, cannot exist in a vacuum. They need to be evaluated and adjusted to reflect reality. As you enter the special session to ensure all eligible Connecticut residents are able to vote by absentee ballot in the upcoming election, I ask that you also ensure that voting rights are protected well past November by removing the words "such elector's or person's" from the draft bill regarding absentee ballot voting. This will ensure that Connecticut voters have access to their voting rights in the future, including any possible special elections in early 2021.

Connecticut is counting on legislators to provide lasting access to the democratic process. A simple removal of three words can enhance both public safety and voting rights. As we continue to navigate the many unknowns of the new normal, it's incumbent upon our leadership to guarantee one of our most fundamental rights - the right to vote.