

Public Hearing 29 February 2008

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Madam Chair/Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the committee:

My name is Mark Fernandes from Newtown. I am currently a junior at Newtown High School, and I am glad to share my thoughts on House Joint Resolution No. 21 with you today. I am in support of this amendment which would grant 17 yr old who will be 18 by the regular election the opportunity to vote in primaries related to that election.

To begin, I think that you should know that while I am seventeen years old, this bill would not impact my status as a voter. However, I do not think this should be a reason for you to disregard the relevance of testimony. The success of this amendment is very important to me and I am even doing an independent project regarding the resolution fed through pure passion and altruistic motivation. The fact is that especially in the recent years of my life, the subject of politics has become very popular among my peers and me. It is not strange for us, especially in recent weeks, to be talking about the outcomes of primaries or our views on the advocacies of specific candidates. However, such involvement is pointless if it does not translate into action, and this is a problem with our current system. During the gap between primaries and regular elections people lose interest. One of the main reasons for this is because the candidate that one was in support for before the primary may no longer be a force. No longer does an individual have the incentive to vote in the general election because their candidate is not there. Yet this could have been different if there was more support for that candidate during the primaries. The conclusion is that primary election involvement does in fact affect regular election involvement, and therefore we should have an obligation to see that all potential voters of general election also have the opportunity to vote in primary elections.

Moreover, I think that a very important aspect of this amendment that is often masked is its regard to faith in the governmental system. High school students, you can take my word for it, are very aware of this fact that that 17yr olds who would be eligible to vote in the regular elections cannot in the primary. They are also aware that in states such as Maryland, Iowa, North Dakota, and Maine, this is not the case. The general attitude among my peers is that CT government falling short from representing an age group that ironically can sign up for the armed forces. We need to change this attitude to sustain support from a group that will be the future of this state. Thank you.