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**HB 6163 AAC an Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the  
United States by the National Popular Vote**

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and distinguished members of the GAE Committee. I am Bilal Dabir Sekou and I am Associate Professor of Political Science in Hillyer College at the University of Hartford. I am also the Chairman of the Board of Common Cause in Connecticut and a long-time scholar of elections in this country.

I am here this morning to testify in favor of House Bill 6163, An Act Concerning an Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by the National Popular Vote.

There is a great history of state level action to dismantle antidemocratic institutions in our country and expand the voting franchise to more Americans. This includes eliminating requirements of wealth and property, direct election of U.S. Senators, ending discriminatory practices that disenfranchised African Americans, and of course women's suffrage. All these movements began at the state level through state action. Indeed, even the right to vote for President itself is a matter of state law, not a right written into the Constitution.

Today, we must continue this progress toward political equality in the election of our nation's most important office. The problem we face stems from state law, namely the practice of awarding votes on a "winner take all" basis.

The "winner take all" rule, whereby whichever candidate wins the most popular votes in Connecticut receives all our electoral votes, sounds innocuous at first. But a Democrat who is sure to win here is no more likely to campaign here or pay

attention to our concerns than a Republican who is sure to lose. As a result, Connecticut is ignored time and time again by both parties.

Far from encouraging candidates to reach out across the country and form broad coalitions, this state law has whittled the campaign field down to at most 15 states where the result could go to either party. The rest of the country is reduced to spectator status.

Of course, this state law has given us four presidents who were elected without getting the most votes. Four out of 56 elections is a failure rate of 1 out of 14. When you exclude landslide elections, the rate is closer to 1 out of 7. In an era of close elections, it's likely we will see another 2000 election in our lifetime. Of course, the problem could hurt Democrats and Republicans alike.

A national popular vote would make every vote equal when it comes to electing the President of the United States. The National Popular Vote bill, relying on Article II section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, giving states exclusive and plenary authority to award votes in any manner they see fit, would accomplish this goal in the time-honored state-based approach that Americans have embraced so often in our history.

Political equality in the United States matters, and the time has come for a national popular vote. Opinion polls show the public wants a system where the most votes wins and every vote counts equally. They want to avoid another "wrong winner" fiasco like the 2000 election. They certainly would not stand for a scenario in which Congress picks the president for them – but that is exactly what could happen under the current system if there were a tie in the Electoral College.

I urge the committee to pass this important legislation and win a victory for democracy and our state's own political relevance in our one national election.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.