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Testimony to the GAE Committee—Public Hearing, March 25, 2013

SB No. 4 AAC Early Voting

Greetings, Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, and members of the GAE Committee. We are the two registrars of voters for the Town of Wilton—Tina Gardner (R) and Carole Young-Kleinfeld (D). We wish to submit joint testimony on the following proposed bill.

SB No. 4 AAC Early Voting

As the two registrars for the Town of Wilton, we strongly support measures to make access to voting easier for voters. However, we urge caution in passing legislation on any early voting measure—whether it be “no excuses” absentee or “municipal-building-based early voting”—before the voters of Connecticut have had their chance to approve the proposed changes to the CT Constitution as contained in HJ-2 passed by the General Assembly in 2012. Both early voting and no-excuses absentee voting introduce significant changes in our state’s electoral procedures which should be carefully vetted by legislators and voters alike to make sure that these changes will work effectively to benefit—and not obstruct—our voters from casting their ballots. After Connecticut voters approve the proposed change to the State Constitution, we urge you to take the time, care, and thoughtfulness in examining the implications of implementing the many forms of early voting measures that may become available to our voters and to make certain that our best intentions don’t go awry.

Section 2 of this proposed bill mandates a limit of 15 minutes for voters to wait to vote. Although we see this as an excellent goal, we believe that a more direct way to accomplish this goal would be to staff our polling places more effectively. We recommend setting a maximum limit on the number of registered voters to be assigned to each check-in line at Connecticut polling places—the exact number to be determined in consultation with the Secretary of the State, and adjusted for the type of election or primary. In a recent meeting of the Registrars of Voters of Fairfield County, following the November election, the variability in the number of voters assigned to polling place check-in lines in different municipalities ranged from 650 voters per line in one municipality to 2800 in another. We recommend setting a standard or imposing a limit per check-in line to avoid long waits for our voters. The benefits of voter convenience and participation are well worth the minimal costs of hiring a few additional polling place checkers.

Thank you.