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Testimony to the GAE Committee—SB 848 An Act Concerning Polling Places for Primaries

Conditional Support—with Caveats

Greetings, Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and GAE Committee Members,

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, supporting SB 848 but with certain conditions.

First, because one proposal may not be fit all towns, we urge the GAE Committee to retain an “optional” provision for municipalities whose registrars do not wish—or agree—to consolidate polling places for primaries. As registrars of a medium-sized town with three large polling places, we both believe that keeping our three polling places identical for primaries and for elections adds stability to the election process, encourages voter turn-out, and minimizes voter confusion.

Second, we urge the GAE Committee to modify timeframes and deadlines in the current version of the bill in order to accommodate all candidates, to alert all affected voters in a timely fashion, and to conduct the advance planning necessary for running a well-organized primary election. The uncertainty of last-minute changes to polling places undermines voter participation, candidate confidence, and effective election management.

We understand that consolidating polling places for primary elections may provide cost-savings for some towns. However, we believe that such savings may be negligible or non-existent for other towns, especially for those with large voting districts and limited—or non-existent—budgets for mass mailings to those affected voters.

Therefore, we conditionally support SB 848, but urge the GAE Committee to keep participation optional and to consider carefully the deadlines included in the current version of the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Young-Kleinfeld and Tina Gardner
Registrars of Voters
Wilton, CT