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Dear Chairpersons Flexer, and Fox and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of HJR-161, a resolution proposing a State constitutional amendment to permit early voting and no-excuse absentee voting.

As I am sure you are aware, 39 states and the District of Colombia have early voting. That puts the state of Connecticut way behind the curve and makes us one of the least accommodating states. We are also one of only 16 states that still require voters to provide a reason for submitting an absentee ballot – and I understand that of those, 7 provide some other early voting option. There are many reasons to make a change!

This past election day I was helping make get out the vote calls. I spoke with a number of people who were having trouble getting to the polls that day, but one woman in particular stands out in my memory. She is in her 90s and said she had never missed an opportunity to vote. But, she was afraid this might be the exception, as she was not feeling well enough that day. No-excuse absentee ballots and/or alternate voting dates would have helped her, as she would have either voted on a day she felt well, or would have sent in the absentee ballot. I am certain that hers is not an isolated case and that the elderly suffer greatly from our current rigid system.

This also affects people who can not get that particular day off work, or enough time off to stand in what has become long lines at many polling stations. I also heard stories of people missing voting because their commuter train ran late.

I am asking you to vote YES on HJR-161 and let the issue go to the voters. Our democracy is made stronger by greater participation. This is not the time to debate the details of how the early voting will be conducted. Once the voters approve the constitutional change those details can be resolved. Please let it get to the voters!

Please vote YES on HJR-161!

With sincere thanks,

Leslee Asch-Morrison
Old Greenwich