

March 10, 2019

Subject: Support for HJ 161: A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting

Dear Senator Mae Flexer, Representative Daniel J. Fox, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

I am Jennifer Kleindienst of Middletown, Connecticut and a member of the Middletown Racial Justice Coalition. I submit this written testimony in support of HJ 161, which will amend the state constitution to allow for early voting and no-excuse absentee voting.

I am fortunate to live and work in Middletown and have an employer that offers flexible scheduling for my needs, including voting on Election Day. Many others in our state do not have the privilege that I do, and enacting early voting and no-excuse absentee voting would expand voting rights access to many across our state.

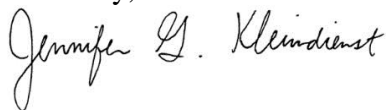
Early voting is nonpartisan and enjoys broad support. As Secretary of State Denise Merrill explains, "According to a 2016 Gallup poll, 80% of Americans support early voting. This support remains consistent among a range of demographic and political groups. For example, according to Gallup, 74% of Republicans, 80% of Independents and 85% of Democrats support early voting." Connecticut would join 39 other states with early voting. Past General Assemblies have favored an early voting amendment, and this deserves a vote in the 2019 session.

There are many individuals who experience challenges voting. Single parents and caregivers must balance child, disabled relative, and elderly relative care with voting. Those who work multiple jobs or who must travel long distances to reach workplaces would similarly benefit, as many are forced today to lose wages to take time off work or not to vote at all. Those who are ill, especially the elderly, would have the flexibility to vote when their health makes it simplest to vote.

Early voting and no-excuse absentee voting would be easier for election officials, who could resolve issues over the course of a longer period of time. Making voting easier for all registered Connecticut voters will strengthen our democracy by giving everyone a voice.

Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on this important bill. I urge you to vote yes on HJ 161. If you have questions, please contact me at [jennifer.kleindienst@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.kleindienst@gmail.com).

Sincerely,



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