

HJ 161: RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR EARLY VOTING AND NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

My name is Tiffani McGinnis and I reside in West Hartford. I am testifying in support of HJ 161: RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR EARLY VOTING AND NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

As many of you may have gathered from my accent, I did not grow up in the north. I was born and raised in Nashville, TN and moved to CT from Chapel Hill, NC two states that allow early voting. The first Presidential election I was old enough to vote in was the 1992 election-at the time TN did not have early voting. I was a full time college student and I worked 20 hours per week, on the day of the election I went to my voting location three times to try to vote, the first two times I had to leave because I had a class or I had to get back to work. The third time I stayed and stood in line for over two hours. In 1994 The Tennessee Early Voting Act was passed; this law allowed for a period of 15 days to vote early. In 96 I again voted on election day (this time with my husband) but the lines were much shorter. In every election after that I voted early. In our house we made voting an event, we took our children with us so they could feel like they were part of the process, we would vote on a Saturday morning and then go to breakfast to celebrate.

In 2010 we moved to Chapel Hill, NC. In NC they even have one stop early voting sites. NC also has a history of a very moving event called "Souls to the Polls" where members of African American churches attend service and then they march to the polls and vote, oftentimes singing hymns as they march. The beauty of this event gives me goosebumps every time I think about it. A group of people who had to fight so hard to even get the right to

vote leaving their church and marching to vote together-to me that is almost a perfect symbol of democracy.

In 2015 we moved to West Hartford, CT I remember asking people “When does early voting start” some people didn’t know what early voting was a few responded “This is CT, we don’t have early voting.” What used to be a fun event turned into us either filling out a paper ballot at home or if in town on election day trudging to the polls when we could find time. My daughter who just turned 22 has never gotten to vote on election day. She has been in college and has always voted absentee ballot-she has never known the excitement of going into her polling place to vote.

In closing, I would like to say as a volunteer on many campaigns in CT, I have heard stories I never heard in TN and NC. People not being able to vote because they had to leave town last minute to care for a sick relative, a single mom with a sick child and most commonly “I work 15 hour days so I won’t be able to vote on election day.” There hundred of things that can happen on election day to keep someone from voting, early voting would remove almost all of those.

Thank you for your time.