

March 8, 2019

Chairpersons Flexer and Fox, and Committee Members
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2200
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Written Testimony in Support of Early Voting Amendment Bill **HJ 161**
Via gaetestimony@cga.ct.gov

My name is Lorelei O'Hagan, an elected member of the Greenwich Representative Town Meeting (RTM), and I strongly support HJ 161.

How easy or how difficult should it be to vote in America? Long lines, child care challenges, time off work, long distance to polling, and fitting voting on a work day all make voting more difficult than it should be for many, especially women with children and those with hourly wage jobs. I've never heard a persuasive argument against making voting easier, more inclusive, more convenient. Neither has our Secretary of State, Denise Merrill, who has dedicated much of her public service to improving voter registration turn-out and process and has worked to find ways to make early voting possible in CT. It is not partisan to make voting accessible to all.

The Federal Government set a single day in 1840 and since that time, the majority of States have changed and improved it to include early voting and No-Excuse Absentee voting. In 1980 California innovated permanent mail ballot status. In 1996 Florida, Tennessee and Texas extended in-person voting. In the 2016 elections a full third of votes came in early voting and 2018 was even stronger, breaking records for mid-term elections.

I'm a professional working mother of two young children and I commute to New York City from Greenwich. I worked from home on Election Day 2018, and volunteered at the polls, a luxury not available to many. There were no lines at the Greenwich Town Hall, where I vote, also a luxury by many accounts across the state where long lines were documented. Long lines are unacceptable. This also highlights an inexcusable disparity which is would be improved with Early Voting. Greenwich and the rest of Fairfield County had easy voting experiences while less well off counties nearby struggled with long lines and a lack of polling staff and resources.

It's time to join 39 other states plus DC and give us greater access to voting by making it more convenient here in CT. I urge you to consider your constituents' wishes, vote in favor of HJR 161 and allow us to have our say on early voting.

Thank you,

Lorelei O'Hagan
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