

March 12, 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 the Early Voting Amendment Bill, HJR 161.

Dear Chairpersons Flexer and Fox and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of HJR 161, a **"Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting."**

My name is Nerlyn Pierson, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of **HJR 161**.

The idea of amending constitutions by the people and periodically dates back to Thomas Jefferson. In a famous letter, Thomas Jefferson wrote that we should "provide in our constitution for its revision at stated periods." "[E]ach generation" should have the "solemn opportunity" to update the constitution "every nineteen or twenty years," thus allowing it to "be handed on, with periodical repairs, from generation to generation, to the end of time." The drafters of the Connecticut Constitution took this advice to heart and ensured during the 1965 constitutional convention that the Connecticut Constitution (the "CT Constitution") could be amended not only (at least once) every 20 years as set forth in Article XIII of the CT Constitution, but also through a legislatively referred constitutional amendment as set forth in Article XII of the CT Constitution.

HJR161 grants the people of Connecticut with a "solemn opportunity" to update the Connecticut Constitution should we decide that early voting and no-excuse absentee is a warranted amendment to our constitution.

There are many advocates for early voting and there are those who do not believe it is necessary. Although I believe early voting and no-excuse absentee voting is important and a boon to our democracy, I am not writing today to highlight the benefits of early voting. Rather, I am writing to advocate for the **choice** to vote on whether we as a state **want** early voting and no-excuse absentee voting. The people of Connecticut should be the ones to decide if the existing state constitution, drafted over 50 years ago, has started to show its age and whether the times require a bold and new constitutional measure to meet our current world order and societal needs and demands.

We, the people, should be given the "solemn opportunity" to make that choice. This "choice" is what Thomas Jefferson advocated for and what the drafters of our state constitution envisioned. It is explicit from Article XII and, especially, Article XIII of the CT Constitution, that the drafters of the CT Constitution anticipated "periodic repairs" to the constitution, from time to time, by each generation. As such, our state legislators should not stand in the way and block proposals that grant the people of Connecticut that opportunity. Our state legislators should

want to hear from the people and empower them with the ability to choose and pave the path of how their state government is structured and their rights allocated. Our state legislatures should let the people of CT decide if a constitutional amendment is warranted. Let's have a "People's Vote" on the matter. As such, I urge you to vote in favor of HJR 161.

Sincerely,

Nerlyn Pierson

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