To the Co-Chairs and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

Testimony SUPPORTING SB233, AA Restoring Electoral Privileges to Felony Convicts Who Are On Parole

Submitted by (Alicia Alamo), (Unlock the vote)

To the co-chairs Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and the esteemed members of the GAE committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak about why I support immediately eliminating the unfair practice of denying two currently disenfranchised groups in the state of Connecticut – totaling more than 7,000 citizens – their democratic right to vote.

These two groups are:

- People being held in pre-trial detention (i.e. community corrections centers: Whalley Ave., North Ave., The Meadows) who have not been convicted, and not currently serving a sentence but are being held as they await judgement. This group has not technically lost their right to vote in the State of Connecticut and places such as CA, AL, Cook County IL, DC, Puerto Rico and VT, ME all allow this group access to the ballot through absentee voting and/or other methods. *Approx. 4,000 Citizens

- People who are currently living, working and paying local, state and federal taxes while serving terms of parole. Currently every New England state except Connecticut, along with NJ, NY, HI, IL, IN, MI, MT, ND, OH, OR, PA, UT as well as the District of Columbia allow this group to vote. *Approx. 4,600 Citizens

I was 23 years old when I was incarcerated and sentenced to 8 years in prison. Though I was eligible for 5 years to vote I hadn’t voted, in fact I never thought of voting because I didn’t know anyone who actively partook in our system. What I realize now is that a large part of the reason people did not
vote around me is because they had records and were systematically involved still and either couldn’t
vote or did not know that they had the right after parole. The consequences of this left me and many
like me completely disengaged in civic duty and right. When I came home, I was determined never to
return to prison and to make sure that I was the last in my family to see the inside of a prison cell. As
a now home owner, wife and mother, I see the effects of not voting and understand how keeping
people locked out harms the future generations of people who grew up in black and brown
neighborhoods like the one I grew up in. I discharged parole in march 2010. I became a mother for
the second time in 2015, I take my son to the polls with me. Something that never happened with me
and my mother because of her contact with the prison system. I may have been off of parole for
almost 10 year now, yet I’m here because as use I know there are a lot of little girls like me who don’t
know that this system can work because it has failed to reach them because there mother or father
haven’t voted because they have years of parole, and they lose hope that the system works. The
effect of keeping people locked out is greater then the people locked out, it’s the locking out of their
families and their communities.

Simply put, the argument against rights restoration are baseless. The notions that bar thousands of
system-involved people from the polls in Connecticut and millions across the nation each election are
by-and-large steeped in an antiquated legacy of an exclusionary democracy that taxes all but rewards
only a few.

In New England, we bear witness to the fallacy of anti-enfranchisement arguments in each of our
states, but particularly Maine and Vermont. These two states are outliers among outliers in the fact
that they have never barred the right to vote to any citizen unless convicted of charges pertinent to
voting laws – leaving voting rights open even to those that are in prisons and jails.

Remaining New England states Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island all are among the
nation’s most progressive in voter restoration rights, joining just 14 other states and the District of
Columbia in ensuring that individuals serving terms of probation and parole have the right to vote.

There have been no recorded increased claims of voter fraud in these other states, allowing them to
exist as real-time, ongoing models of a more just societies of where people who live, work and are
taxed in their communities can have a say in the way they are governed. It’s time that Connecticut
joined them. For these reasons, I support ___ to Unlock The Vote.

Thank you,

(Alicia Alamo)