Greetings Chair Flexer, Chair Fox, and distinguished members of the GAE committee.

Thank you so much for your time! My name is Garrett Frye-Mason, and I am a legislative captain of the Yale College Democrats and the legislative coordinator of Every Vote Counts at Yale. Today, I am absolutely delighted to be here to express strong and impassioned support for SB 233 on behalf of the youth of Connecticut. In 2018, a year where the nation celebrated historic turnout, we still bore witness to a troubling trend: while youth may have turned out at greater rates than past years, we still had turnout rates that were significantly lower than any other age at only around 30% nationally. With the policies of our future being decided right now in rooms just like this, we cannot wait for our generation to grow older to vote and be represented.

Thus, I am excited to support SB233 because I believe that sections (1), (3), and (4) will all have positive impacts on developing a stronger and healthier culture of voting in my generation.

Not only do I believe that all Americans have a right to vote and that section 3 of this bill, which will re-enfranchise parolees in Connecticut, is a tiny but necessary step in rectifying the abhorrent racial disparities in our political and electoral systems, I also believe that this bill will help to develop a stronger culture of voting for youth in underrepresented communities. According to an abundance of academic research, voting is a habit: if you do it once, you’ll do it again. And it is a habit that is carefully crafted by those around us, by our friends and by our families: As Mark Franklin of Harvard even stated, “The most important thing you can say to parents is take your kids to the polling place.” Currently, however, the disenfranchisement of parolees in CT is greatly harming this necessary habit building. It leads to habits of nonvoting. It erodes cultures of an engaged citizenry. And in effect, it is a punishment on children for the crimes of the parent. How can children learn to vote and participate if we prevent their parents and communities from doing so? Accordingly, I believe we must re-enfranchise these voters.

Additionally, I support section (4) which would expand AVR’s clear introduction to democracy, especially at DMVs, for young people and section (1) which would increase access to voting and fix polling issues that particularly impact college students. Thank you for your time and consideration of this necessary legislation.

Blue Skies,

Garrett Frye-Mason