Senator Mae Flexer Representative Daniel J. Fox Co-Chairs

Senator Rob Sampson Representative Mike France Ranking Members

Government Administration and Elections Committee Legislative Office Building, Room 2200
Hartford, CT 06106

March 24, 2020

Dear Senators Flexer and Sampson; Representatives Fox and France:

Hamden Democratic Town Committee represents a diverse coalition of tens of thousands of residents across the Town of Hamden. Our constituencies include government supporters, labor groups, civil rights organizations, working families, and more. We are writing to you with one message: we must pass Automatic Voter Registration this session. We appreciate your support to make this happen through S.B. No. 233 An Act Concerning Elections.

As you know, Connecticut has been on the forefront of expanding voting rights and ensuring that all residents have every opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Expanding the right to vote is central to a healthy democracy—which is why providing reintegration into community and investment in citizenship by granting parolees the right to vote is so critically important. Yet, we also know that our elections need to be modernized. Long wait times for same-day registration, overburdened poll workers, and archaic systems continue to affect our elections. Automatic Voter Registration – known as AVR – has been passed in 16 different states, often with bipartisan majorities. It needs to be passed in Connecticut.

More than anything, AVR modernizes our elections and helps make government systems electronic and efficient. In short, when an eligible resident does business with a state agency, an AVR system simply uses that information – which citizens are already providing to government offices through their transaction – to verify their eligibility to vote and register them. By making the system electronic and automatically registering residents, this common-sense, nonpartisan reform helps capture the full potential of our democracy, streamline elections, and save money in the long-term.

As you know, the following are benefits of AVR:

• **Automatically Updates Voter Rolls**

AVR ensures the most accurate voter information, reduces duplicate registrations, and collects up-to-date information that is securely collected and transferred to the Secretary of the State’s Office and the local registrar of voters. The eligible voter can indicate a party preference or opt-
out of registration. If a voter does not choose to opt out, they are securely added to the rolls. AVR relies on the most up to date information to ensure a smooth and secure process to automatically register hundreds of thousands more voters.

- **Registers Young, Low-Income, and Diverse Voters**

  If AVR were to be implemented in Connecticut, we would have the potential to register roughly 245,396 more voters in the first year of implementation. For example, in Oregon, a state that has fully implemented AVR, the initiative ensured that 94% of eligible voters were registered with just 6% opting out.

  While Connecticut has led the country on voter access, there are still voters that we are not reaching. As we’ve seen in other states, those voters are overwhelming younger people, individuals in low-income areas, and people of color.

- **Streamlines Elections**

  Year after year, we’ve seen long lines to register to vote, causing long waits. We know that staff on the ground are doing their best, but AVR simplifies the registration process by ensuring staff spend less time on paperwork and manual data entry, and more time on ensuring election run smoothly. With AVR, many same-day registrants would already be registered to vote, freeing up time and resources for our registrars, moderators, and their staffs.

- **Saves Municipalities Time and Money**

  By moving from paper to electronic methods, AVR eliminates the costs of provisional ballots, costly paper transactions, and manual data entry. By delivering more streamlined elections, we can ease the burden on municipalities while freeing up time, resources, and saving critical dollars in the process. It’s estimated that municipalities could save about $3.54 in labor costs per registration by moving from a paper to electronic method.

  States across the country are passing and implementing Automatic Voter Registration, and it’s critical that Connecticut join them this legislative session. We must take this opportunity to expand voting rights, because we have an obligation to make it more convenient – not harder – for residents to vote. Connecticut can become a model for the country, but its voting laws must help engender change. We have the policy solutions—we just need the political will to implement them.

  Consequently, we strongly urge you to support Automatic Voter Registration and the Right to Vote for Parolees.

  Signed,

  Hamden Democratic Town Committee