Testimony of Michael Katz

UConn Public Interest Research Group
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)

in support of

SB 233, AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTIONS

Chairperson Flexer, Chairperson Fox, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, I am writing in support of SB 233, AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTIONS. My name is Michael Katz and I’m from Avon, Connecticut. I am currently a senior at UConn and I’m a member of UConnPIRG, currently serving as its chapter secretary.

As a student at UConn, I know that my peers and I are engaged citizens, acting as leaders on-campus and in the state for the causes we care about. Voting is fundamental to representation in the legislature and to ensuring that our democracy works to resolve those issues. However, with long lines, challenging election day procedures, and our own busy schedules as students, it becomes increasingly difficult to navigate the political process.

The youth vote is the largest demographic, but consistently has the lowest voter turnout. At the same time, we know that, based on student-led movements for environmental preservation, affordable education, and an end to hunger and homelessness, students are on the forefront of grassroots change. I have passionately advocated for civic engagement and voter education for roughly half my life, including my time at UConn. In fall 2018, I helped to register over 2,000 students to vote and increase voter turnout at the Mansfield Community Center by 90 percent from 2014. These students need a system in which voter registration and mobilization is accessible, especially as we approach a major election cycle.

Automatic Voter Registration has been implemented in 16 states across the United States and presents an opportunity to further enfranchise people across the State of Connecticut, particularly those of historically low registration and turn-out.

Automatic Voter Registration:

- Has the potential to increase registration rates for people of color, women, and those with lower incomes
- Ensures accurate voter registration data
- Facilitates the voter registration process and alleviates the burden of Election Day Registration, which many students utilize with their restrictive school and work schedules.
This bill presents an opportunity to ensure that democracy is not a spectator sport. At the end of the day, it is our goal to ensure that every voter who wishes to vote may do so regardless of the challenges of their schedule. Every vote matters and we need to work to make sure that our system works.

Again, I strongly support this bill and urge the Government, Elections, and Administration Committee to do the same. Thank you.