Good afternoon Chairperson Flexer, Chairperson Fox, and members of the committee. My name is Jaylyn Perry and I came here today to ask this committee to pass the act concerning elections. I am particularly concerned with the changes being made to Section Three of this bill regarding parole. I am in agreement with the proposed changes to this section that restores the right to vote for those on parole.

I am currently getting my master’s degree in social work at UCONN and will be graduating in May. As a social worker I believe it is important to advocate for social justice and the dignity and worth of all people, since these are two core values of the social work profession. Making the proposed changes to section three of this bill would be an affirmation of these values. Obviously, it is not only social workers who hold these values, so I urge the members of this committee to show they believe in social justice and the dignity and worth of all people by voting to pass this bill.

Individuals who have served their prison sentence and are on parole have begun their reentry into society. Therefore, they should no longer be disenfranchised. Being stripped of the core democratic right to vote renders felons second-class citizens. Extending the consequences of a crime beyond a prison sentence is unjust. To achieve social justice and affirm that these individuals have the same dignity and worth of all citizens, the voting rights of those on parole need to be restored. Through the restoration of voting rights for those on parole, convicted felons receive the message from our state that upon their exit from prison they have the opportunity to start over and exercise their civic duty as law-abiding citizens that positively contribute to society by participating in the democratic process.

If Connecticut residents took a look around, we would notice that we are surrounded by states that have passed legislation to restore the voting rights of those on parole. Connecticut is behind its neighbors on this piece of legislation. Connecticut is the last state in New England to allow the voting rights of parolees to be restored.¹ Please do not wait any longer to take a step towards social justice for residents on parole in Connecticut. I urge you to pass the act concerning voting in order to restore the right the vote for those on parole.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.