Testimony of Carly Saindon

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 Carly Saindon and I’m from Newington, Connecticut. I am currently a Sophomore at UConn and I’m a member of UConnPIRG.

As a student at UConn, I know that myself and my peers 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 fall of my freshman year at UConn was my first time voting, in the 2018 midterm elections. I was excited to vote and participate in democracy for the first time, but I was uninformed and confused about how to go about voting. I was registered to vote in Newington, and the deadline for an absentee ballot had already passed. Thankfully, UConnPIRG came into one of my classes and answered all of my questions. They helped me to register in Mansfield and gave me helpful information about polling locations and times.

On election day, my friends and I showed up at the polls pretty late after our classes were over. Many of my friends were planning on registering that day at the polls. However, the lines were extremely long, and they didn’t get the opportunity to register, and therefore didn’t end up voting in that election. Though I did get to vote, I felt disappointed that my friends didn’t get the chance and I felt defeated that they were not able to participate in the political process. Automatic voter registration would make it much easier for students to vote and make their voices heard.

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. These students need a system in which voter registration and mobilization is accessible.

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 and is fair to all people involved.

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