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 Irene Soteriou and I’m from Middletown, Connecticut. I am currently a freshman at the University of Connecticut 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. After only a single semester on campus, I have already heard countless students complain that they do not feel that their votes will count, nor that their voices will be heard, considering the lack of demonstrated acknowledgement of these barriers.

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.

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