Testimony of Cheyenne Tavares

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 Cheyenne Tavares. I am currently a freshman at UConn Storrs, and I am 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. There are a lot of students on campus who don’t even know where their polling location is, and as much as we offer those resources and information to them, many of them feel that the ten minute bus ride, or the twenty minute walk, is an inconvenience. Last semester, I personally had engineering majors talk to me about how they wish they had the time to vote during the election, but because of their long class schedule and study hours, they could not fit that ten minute bus ride in. Not to mention another ten minutes for the way back, and even more time if they haven’t registered. Voting should be easily accessible to all students.

This bill will also restore, without the payment of certain fines, the electoral privileges of convicted felons who are on parole. This is important to me specifically, because I strongly believe that our government is based on a system of justice, and while certain privileges may be taken away from convicted felons, we should not restrict their voice. To me, that is based on revenge. Voting should be easily accessible to all citizens.

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.

Provides reintegration into community and investment in citizenship by restoring the right to vote as soon as people return to the community.

Makes people who committed a felony violation of election laws serve their full parole before getting their voting rights back.

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.