Testimony of Odette White Eagle member of the Katal Center for Health Equity and Justice

In support of SB 233, An Act Concerning Elections
Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 28, 2020

Good morning members of the Government Administration and Election Committee. My name is Odette White Eagle and I’m a member of Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice. I support the proposed bill, SB 233. I am also a second year MSW student at the UConn School of Social Work. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 233, AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTIONS.

The reason that I am in support of this bill, is because all citizens should have the right to vote regardless whether or not they have been convicted of committing a crime. Due to the fact that Connecticut has high incarceration rates, there are thousands of people in prison and on parole who are currently not allowed to vote in this state. No matter what your views are about people that have been convicted, they are still citizens and they should have a say in matters that will affect themselves or their community.

In addition, the law currently states that people on parole who have not paid their fines are not allowed to vote until they are paid in full. This disproportionately affects poor people who cannot afford to pay off their fines quickly. Not only is this unfair, but it further disenfranchises this group of people by taking away their right to vote. Essentially punishing them for being poor.

Furthermore, getting rid of unnecessary barriers for people to vote is essential in making sure that everyone is represented in elections. Voting should be made as easy as possible in order to reduce voter suppression. Automatic Voter Registration is a great way increase voter participation and has huge success in other parts of the country.

In conclusion, I support SB 233. Equality is for everyone. Thank you for your time.