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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 6205 (as amended by House "A")\***

#### ***AN ACT REVISING CERTAIN ABSENTEE VOTING STATUTES.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill expands two of the six statutory reasons for which qualified voters (i.e., electors and people eligible to vote) may vote by absentee ballot (see BACKGROUND). Under the bill, qualified voters may vote by absentee ballot if, during the specified time, they are unable to appear at their polling place because of (1) sickness generally, rather than because of their illness, or (2) physical disability generally, rather than because of their physical disability.

Additionally, the bill generally authorizes qualified voters to vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at their polling place on the day of the primary, election, or referendum, rather than during the hours of voting as under current law. It also specifies that qualified voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are absent from the municipality where they are an inhabitant, rather than the municipality of their voting residence.

The bill requires that absentee ballots be updated to reflect the above changes. Specifically, the statement printed on the face of absentee ballots' inner envelope must show the revised reasons for which electors may vote absentee. By law, absentee voters must sign the statement under penalties of false statement in absentee balloting, which is a class D felony punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both (CGS § 9-359a).

Lastly, the bill makes technical changes.

\*House Amendment "A" makes the bill effective upon passage, rather than October 1, 2021, and preserves provisions on absentee voting in the 2020 state election.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Related Constitutional Amendment***

sHJ 58 (File 96), which the House passed by a majority of the membership but less than three-fourths, proposes a constitutional amendment to remove the state constitution's current restrictions on absentee voting.

### ***Related Bill***

sSB 5 (File 570), reported favorably by the Government Administration and Elections Committee, contains similar provisions.

### ***Permitted Reasons Under the Constitution for Voting by Absentee Ballot***

The state constitution authorizes the General Assembly to pass a law allowing eligible voters to cast their votes by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at a polling place on election day because of (1) absence from their city or town, (2) sickness or physical disability, or (3) the tenets of their religion prohibiting secular activity (Conn. Const. Art. VI, § 7). The General Assembly exercised this authority and passed laws codified at CGS § 9-135.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 6 (04/05/2021)