



OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton

***GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE***

March 17, 2021

Good Afternoon, my name is Michael R. Criss, I am the First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton and I am submitting testimony regarding H.B. 5883 "An Act Concerning Voting for Municipal Officers and on Local Questions."

H.B. 5883 "An Act Concerning Voting for Municipal Officers and on Local Questions"

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and submit testimony on proposed H.B. 5883 "An Act Concerning Voting for Municipal Officers and on Local Questions." The Town of Harwinton is opposed to proposed bill H.B. 5883. The bill's main purpose is to permit sixteen-year-olds to vote at elections and primaries of local officers and on local questions, however why this bill does not mention state and federal elections is curious in itself.

Our children today have so much on their plates as it is; virtual learning, worrying about getting their drivers license, where they will go to school, how they will pay for school, where they will work, etc. When do we allow kids to just be kids? This bill proposes that sixteen-year-olds will be able research current issues, are actively aware of the effect of the issues on themselves, or aware of how the community is impacted by issues that they don't even fully understand or have the time to research. Developmentally, they may not fully comprehend the long-term effects of voting one way or another but yet they will have to live with the outcome of casting their vote.

The State of Connecticut requires one to be eighteen years old to run for office. The State does not trust sixteen-year-olds to drive the first six months after getting their license with passengers, only after driving six months are, they allowed to drive only family members (no friends),

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The State doesn't trust them to operate a hands-free phone while driving. The State of Connecticut

doesn't allow sixteen-year-olds to work at certain places of employment (for example pharmacies) until they are eighteen. A child's brain is not even fully developed until twenty-five years of age. With all of this said, I can't imagine why a bill would be proposed to have a minor make fundamental decisions when the state doesn't even trust them with basic responsibilities. There should be a bill to propose that sixteen-year-olds learn how to balance a checkbook, keep a budget, learn about healthcare benefits & retirement plans, learn vehicle emergency protocols, etc. as these skill sets build responsible and reliable citizens. Why are we asking our children to grow up so fast without first developing basic life skills? Over the years, we have failed our children in so many areas, but now we want to bury them with the burden of voting at sixteen years old? This bill is nothing more than irresponsible, ill-drafted and with little care or thought for our children.

We ask that the committee take no action on this bill and if they must, vote no.

The Town of Harwinton is opposed to H.B. 5883. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of the Town of Harwinton. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

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