



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5883, An Act Concerning Voting  
for Municipal Officers and on Local Questions**

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5883, An Act Concerning Voting for Municipal Officers and on Local Questions.

The ACLU of Connecticut strongly supports measures to ensure equal access to the ballot box. Improving voting rights and voting access strengthen democracy, since voting is the foundation of democracy itself. We especially support measures that increase voting access for historically disenfranchised groups.<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., age has consistently been a bar to voting since the earliest days of the nation. Until 1971, 18-year-olds did not have universal suffrage.<sup>2</sup>

Youth activists have highlighted numerous benefits to lowering the voting age to 16, including making voting a habit before a person undergoes major life changes at age 18, many of which, like moving out or starting college, pose barriers to voting.<sup>3</sup> Countries with lowered voting ages see higher participation in the 16-17 age range than in the 18-20 age range.<sup>4</sup> It also gives young people a voice in decisions that

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., “The Voting Age,” CQ Researcher, *available at* <https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre1944090900>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Manisha Claire, “How young activists got 18-year-olds the right to vote in record time.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, Nov. 11, 2020, *available at* <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-young-activists-got-18-year-olds-right-vote-record-time-180976261/>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Generation Citizen, “Young Voices at the Ballot Box” at 5. *Vote 16 USA*, May 14, 2020, *available at* <https://vote16usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/white-paper-5.14.20.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

affect them – the true soul of democracy.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it gives young people in the U.S. a participatory civics education.<sup>6</sup> All of these benefits come with little downside, since studies demonstrate that 16-year-olds have very similar political knowledge as the 18-year-olds who already have the right to vote.<sup>7</sup>

We believe that when more people vote, our democracy is strengthened and deepened. House Bill 5883 provides a unique path to expanding the electorate and we support it. We encourage this Committee to do the same.

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 6.