Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative France and distinguished members of the
Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Carl Chisem and I am President of the Connecticut
Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511 and the Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506. We
represent approximately 6,000 active and retired blue collar maintenance and service State workers as well as 1,000
municipal and Board of Education employees. Our members provide valuable services within our state facilities, many of
whom have been working on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic. They cook, clean, repair, maintain and deliver
in Connecticut’s State buildings, hospitals, college campuses, airports, roads, bridges and parks. They represent the true
diversity of our great State.

I submit this testimony in strong support of Working Draft LCO No. 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Voting at the 2020
State Election and Election Day Registration. Voting is a fundamental right that is one of the major forms of communication
between citizens and their elected officials. Already, too many hardworking Americans face tremendous barriers that
interfere with their ability to cast their ballot. We must not allow COVID-19, and the expected surge of cases in the fall, to
prevent anyone from exercising their right to vote.

As elected officials, you have the responsibility to guarantee that we can vote safely without risking our lives or the lives
of others. We must not repeat the mistakes made in Wisconsin’s primary on April 7th where voters were forced to choose
between their well-being and their freedom of speech. Such implicit acts of voter suppression should never be justified or
tolerated. With an expanded access to absentee voting in the November general election, eligible voters will not have to
sacrifice their health or, in some cases their lives, in order to ensure their voices are heard and their votes are counted.

While adding a one-time COVID-19 excuse to vote absentee for the 2020 general election is a great step forward in
safeguarding the validity of our democracy, the bill restricts voting rights beyond the language of Connecticut’s state
constitution. You must go further and align state statute with the state constitution to ensure voting rights are secured.
By removing the four words – “such elector’s or person’s” – from the draft bill regarding absentee voting, it will ensure
that, as long as the pandemic remains in America, eligible Connecticut voters will have access to voting rights, including
any possible special elections in early 2021. Future legislatures should not have to continue to come back in for special
sessions to protect voting rights.

I ask that you support this language with these slight revisions. Enacting these changes now will protect one’s right to vote
safely and will prevent any added opportunities of voter suppression at a time when so many are fighting to have their
voices heard.

Thank you.