



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 6578: An Act Concerning Participation in the Electoral Process**

**Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut  
March 10, 2021**

Chairs and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting House Bill 6578: An Act Concerning Participation in the electoral process.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice. Part of that broader movement for social and economic justice is an inclusive democracy, where everyone is able to exercise their right to vote without barriers.

At Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, we believe facilitating everyone's right to vote is a key cornerstone to a vibrant democracy. We support HB 6578 because it does exactly that – facilitates participation in our elections and allows previously locked out voters to participate, as well.

First, **we support the codification of automatic voter registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles.** We also think that **automatic voter registration should be expanded to other state agencies and programs, such as the Department of Social Services, HUSKY, Access Health CT, state colleges and universities and more.** Expanding automatic voter registration:

- Would help to register roughly 245,400 new voters, according to the Center for American Progress;
- Would reduce long lines, delays and barriers on election day by moving registrations online;
- Could save an average of \$3.50 in labor costs per registration, as other localities have done by moving from a paper to electronic method; and
- Would enhance the security and integrity of our elections by eliminating outdated addresses and duplicative registrations through an automatic process.

In a recent Secure Democracy public opinion poll, 77% of Connecticut voters support Automatic Voter Registration.

Second, **we support restoring rights to parolees.** Currently, Connecticut has the strictest criminal disenfranchisement laws in the Northeast and is the only state in the region that still prohibits those on parole from voting. People on probation can vote, but not those on parole, which disenfranchises about 3,500 Connecticut residents.

This disenfranchisement disproportionately impacts communities with significant populations of Black and Latinx people, as those on parole are concentrated in a small number of Connecticut communities. By not allowing those on parole to vote, it undermines those on parole's re-integration and decreases the voting power of the communities where parolees reside.

Civic participation is part of the health of a community. Access to voting means that communities can use the power of the ballot box to make the change they want to see in their communities. No one should be denied the right to participate in our elections and the state of Connecticut should employ all avenues possible to increase voter participation. We believe this proposal helps to move the needle to greater civic engagement for all communities across the state.

We urge you to pass this proposal, as it would facilitate voting for all throughout Connecticut with automatic voter registration, and allows more people to participate in democracy, by restoring the right to vote to those on parole. These are critical actions to truly allow an open and inclusive democratic process in Connecticut. Thank you.