



Testimony in Support of House Joint Resolution No. 58: A Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting

**Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
February 22, 2021**

Thank you, chairs and members of the Committee on Governmental Administration and Elections, for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Joint Resolution No. 58: A Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting.

According to the Connecticut State Constitution, voters may currently vote by absentee ballot if they meet one of six specific reasons.ⁱ These restrictions place an undue burden on Connecticut voters. Accessible voting must be a priority to ensure that all people are heard. Reducing barriers to voting allows for increased civic participation, including for people of color. Eliminating any barrier improves equity because when voting is less complicated it is more accessible.

No-excuse absentee voting (NEAV) is supported by 73% of Connecticut residents.ⁱⁱ The 2020 General Election had a record turnout of almost 80% of registered votersⁱⁱⁱ and about 35% of ballots cast were absentee ballots.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite this election being the first in Connecticut history where any resident could vote by mail, this election also had the lowest absentee ballot rejection rate, at less than 1%, showing that absentee voting is a viable option.ⁱⁱⁱ NEAV makes voting more convenient and increases voter turnout, thereby strengthening our democracy.

Currently, 34 states and Washington D.C. do not require an excuse for absentee voting. Five of these states automatically send ballots to all registered voters.^{iv} Connecticut voters should have the option of NEAV to ensure everyone's voice is heard. This is an issue of equity that must be addressed. We urge you to support this resolution. Thank you.

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.

ⁱ The Office of Secretary of the State. (2020). *Absentee voting*. <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Voter-Information/Absentee-Voting>

-
- ⁱⁱ Common Cause Connecticut. (2021, February 10). *No excuse absentee voting* [Fact Sheet]. <https://www.commoncause.org/connecticut/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2021/02/CT-No-Excuse-Absentee-Voting-One-Page.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Secretary of the State Denise W. Merrill. (2020, December 3). *Historic number of votes cast by absentee ballot in the 2020 election* [Press Release]. <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Press-Releases/2020-Press-Releases/Historic-Number-of-Votes-Cast-by-Absentee-Ballot-in-the-2020-Election>
- ^{iv} National Conference of State Legislators. (2020, May 1). *States with no-excuse absentee voting*. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-1-states-with-no-excuse-absentee-voting.aspx>