



March 4, 2022

TESTIMONY **IN SUPPORT OF**

**SB 184** An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of Covid-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot

**HB 5262** An Act Revising Certain Absentee Voting Eligibility Statutes

**To:** Honored Chairs Sen. Mae Flexer and Rep. Daniel Fox and Distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

**From:** Connor Yakaitis, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT of SB 184 and HB 5262** to address Absentee Ballot Eligibility requirements. As an environmental organization committed to building a more environmentally-conscious electorate, we believe it is critical that Connecticut voters have safe and equitable access to voting.

**Democracy, equity and the environment are all intertwined.** The safer and easier it is to vote, the more people will be able to make their voices heard, which will more accurately reflect the public's concerns on key environmental issues across the state.

While Connecticut has made great strides in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all seen the unpredictability of new variants forming, especially in the colder months. By extending the current expanded eligibility requirements through November 8, 2022, we are ensuring that people have a safe way of casting their ballots this election cycle.

However, allowing more people to vote through Absentee Ballots should not be restricted to pandemics. By revising the Absentee Ballot Eligibility Requirements, more voters will be able to cast their ballots on Election Day. This includes caretakers for individuals with illnesses or disabilities. It also includes people who work outside of their voting district, people working multiple jobs, people attending college classes and parents who have to care for their children.

**This is not just a democracy issue, this is an equity issue.**

The environment has become a key voting issue each election cycle. More and more people are growing deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change, pollution in their communities, and access to natural resources.

Expanding absentee ballots to voters across Connecticut allows more of these concerns to be heard. CTLCV's work depends on voter engagement and our support for pro-environment candidates includes removing any unnecessary obstacles to voting on Election Day.

### **Voter suppression has no place in Connecticut.**

The following four bullet points outline the advantages of Absentee Ballots:

- Expands eligibility to vote by AB to include illness in general and removes the requirement that the voters themselves are "sick." Under the new statutory interpretation of illness, an elector can vote AB if caring for a sick child, spouse, etc.
- Expands eligibility to vote by AB to include physical disability in general and not the individual's physical disability. An elector who is a caretaker for a person or family member with a physical disability can vote by AB and not take time away from care for that person.
- Expands eligibility to vote AB if you will be out of town during the **majority** of voting hours. This takes into consideration your commute to and from work, if it is extensive and out of your voting district.
- This recognizes the daily challenges modern day workers, parents, etc. face when trying to establish a work-life balance on election day.

CTLCV urges the committee to **SUPPORT SB 184 and HB 5262** in order to ensure safe and equitable access to voting so people across Connecticut can make their concerns on climate change and environmental justice heard.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

CTLCV

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