



Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

Senate Bill 1057, An Act Concerning The Secretary Of The State And Early Voting

Senate Bill 1064, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting

House Bill 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting

Senate Joint Resolution 29, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse
Absentee Voting

House Joint Resolution 1, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse
Absentee Voting

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

**Mendi Blue Paca,
President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation**

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. Fairfield County's Community Foundation is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony **on Senate Bill 1057, An Act Concerning The Secretary Of The State And Early Voting, Senate Bill 1064, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting, House Bill 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting, Senate Joint Resolution 29, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting, and House Joint Resolution 1, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting.**

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves the 23 towns and cities in Fairfield County. We work closely with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and philanthropists to address challenges and identify opportunities to create a Fairfield County where everyone has an equitable opportunity to thrive. Informed by three decades of partnering with and serving our community, we have awarded over \$390 million in grants to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond.

As part of our efforts to advance racial equity in education, health, housing, and income and asset building in our region, Fairfield County's Community Foundation supports **civic and resident engagement**.

Building power and amplifying the voices among those most impacted by inequities and injustices in our current systems is a strategic priority for Fairfield County's Community Foundation. The Foundation provides grants to support get-out-the-vote activities and resident participation in local government to share ideas on how resources could be used to make our community a better place. Nonprofit organizations and community groups supported by the Foundation have worked to develop resident leadership and create opportunities for collective action.

In 2022, Fairfield County's Community Foundation launched a Get-Out-the-Vote campaign focused on educating and engaging as many residents as possible in Fairfield County about the importance of voting and the integrity of our election system. A key aim of the campaign was to empower individuals, particularly those who have previously yet to engage in the political process, to make a plan to vote to ensure they have a say in who



represents them at the local, state, and federal levels. In 2020, we launched a Civic Education Grants Program supporting organizations engaging in efforts to improve civic knowledge and information access for historically disengaged and/or disenfranchised resident populations in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford, and Stratford.

The Foundation supports the primary goals of Senate Bill 1057, An Act Concerning The Secretary Of The State And Early Voting, Senate Bill 1064, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting, and House Bill 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting, which seeks to provide eligible Connecticut voters the opportunity to cast their votes before Election Day. Connecticut is one of just four states that does not allow early voting. We know that many residents, particularly adults in low-income working families, have limited flexibility to cast their votes on Election Day. By creating additional days for people to vote, including evenings and weekends, Connecticut can ensure that every eligible voter has the opportunity to make their voice heard at the ballot box. Providing more days to vote will place an additional burden on municipal registrars of voters and town clerks. **The Foundation encourages the legislature to allocate sufficient funds to provide the resources municipalities need to hire additional staff, provide training, and meet other related expenses.**

The Foundation also supports Senate Bill 1064, An Act Implementing Early Voting which would establish early voting in 2023 for certain elections and beginning in 2024 for certain primaries, special elections and referenda. Implementing early voting during the municipal election will help to ensure the systems are in place in preparation for the 2024 presidential election when voter turnout is the highest. Because the goal is to ensure as many legally eligible people can vote as possible, the Foundation supports the bill's call to expand the opportunity for eligible Connecticut residents to benefit from same-day election and same-day primary registrations during periods of early voting. As this represents a significant change in how Connecticut engages in elections, **the Foundation supports the bill's requirement that the Secretary of the State undertake efforts to educate the public about early voting and train registrars of voters regarding the administration of early voting.**

Before COVID, five states were already conducting elections entirely by mail, with another 29 states and Washington D.C. offering "no-excuse" absentee voting to all voters. With adequate resources and preparation, there is no reason Connecticut can't do the same. To this end, the

Foundation supports **Senate Joint Resolution 29, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting, and House Joint Resolution 1, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting.**

The Foundation is eager to partner with legislators and advocates to support efforts to ensure that all residents have a voice on critical issues and solutions that are responsive to and reflective of our entire community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Elaine Mintz, VP of Strategy and External Relations, at emintz@fccfoundation.org or 203-750-3209.