



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving 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**

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

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**

**February 22, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving 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.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. Over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed \$99 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$940 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation supports **civic and resident engagement** in our region.

Supporting community voice and leadership is a strategic priority for the Hartford 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. The Foundation believes it is vital that policy decisions are informed by a diverse group of residents who are impacted by the actions at City Hall and the State Capitol.



**Hartford Foundation**

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In 2018, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving launched its first nonpartisan voter registration initiative for Greater Hartford. Known as Get Out the Vote (GOTV), the objective was to reach out to populations least likely to participate in federal, state and local elections as confirmed by data: young adults, Latinx and Black residents and people living in neighborhoods with lower voter registration and turnout rates. Thirteen community-based nonprofits successfully registered over 1,000 new voters and received 1,500 pledges to participate in the 2018 elections. Building off lessons learned from the 2018 effort, the following year the Hartford Foundation awarded 20 grants totaling \$448,400 to support voter engagement and Census participation. This year the Hartford Foundation will be awarding individual grants up to \$25,000 for a total of up to \$200,000 to encourage greater civic engagement and increase voter participation in the Capital City.

The Hartford Foundation remains committed to elevating community voices, such as through participation in the electoral process. As the community foundation for Greater Hartford, we believe we have a role to fill in helping local nonprofit organizations deliver education and outreach efforts that encourage people to register, learn about the issues that affect them and cast their ballot.

**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 seek to provide eligible Connecticut voters the opportunity to cast their votes prior to Election Day. Connecticut is one of just four states in the nation 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 beginning 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.**

Prior to 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 the 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 feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfpg.org](mailto:policy@hfpg.org) or 860-548-1888.