



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony on House Bill 6693, An Act Concerning Absentee Voting, and Senate Bill 713, An Act Concerning the Disclosure of Absentee Ballot Applications

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify on House Bill 6693, An Act Concerning Absentee Voting and on Senate Bill 713, An Act Concerning the Disclosure of Absentee Ballot Applications.

The ACLU-CT strongly supports measures to ensure equal access to the ballot box and we are especially supportive of measures that increase voting access for historically disenfranchised groups, particularly Black voters. Improving voting rights and voting access strengthens democracy, since voting is a cornerstone of democracy itself.

We support the measures in Sections 1 through 3 of House Bill 6693 that are aimed at improving the process of curing ballots. This bill designates a period of time in which absentee ballots that lack a signature or other information may be returned to Registrars of Voters so that voters may be contacted to cure their absentee ballots or vote in-person on Election Day.

But, the ACLU-CT does not support Section 4 of House Bill 6693 and Senate Bill 713, which would subject the personal details in absentee ballot applications to be subject

to public disclosure. There is little justification as to why absentee ballot *applications*, which contain personal information, will benefit the electoral process. We know that absentee voting is secure and that vote by mail fraud is rare.¹

Absentee voting in Connecticut during the pandemic was an enormous success. Approximately 35 percent of voters voted by absentee ballot—about four times more than the typical absentee voting rate.² Despite this massive growth in absentee voting, the Office of the Secretary of the State halved its typical absentee ballot rejection rate.³ There is no need or justification for subjecting absentee ballot applications to public disclosure, and we oppose the provisions in House Bill 6693 and Senate Bill 713 that would require this and urge this Committee to amend these bills to remove those sections.

¹ *Vote By Mail and Absentee Voting*, MIT ELECTION DATA & SCI. HUB (accessed Feb. 21, 2023), <https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/voting-mail-and-absentee-voting>.

² See *Election Center*, CONN. SECRETARY OF THE STATE (Nov. 3, 2020), <https://ctempublic.pctg.net/#/voterTurnout>.

³ See CT Mirror Staff, *Across Connecticut, No Problems at the Polls*, CT MIRROR (Nov. 3, 2020), <https://ctmirror.org/2020/11/03/pandemic-or-not-connecticut-expects-huge-turnout-as-voters-head-to-pollstoday/>.