



Legislative Testimony  
765 Asylum Avenue, First Floor  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-523-9146  
[www.acluct.org](http://www.acluct.org)

**Written Testimony Supporting  
House Bill 5250, An Act Concerning Released Felons' Voting Rights**

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kaley Lentini, and I am legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5250, An Act Concerning Released Felons' Voting Rights.

The right to vote is a fundamental part of America's democracy, and the government should not abridge that right lightly. Restoring the right to vote for people who have been disenfranchised strengthens our democracy by increasing voter participation and helping formerly incarcerated people to reintegrate into society.

As an organization that defends the right to vote and believes that enfranchisement is an incredibly important way for people to participate in America's democracy, the ACLU-CT supports this bill, which would require the Commissioner of the Department of Correction to give people who are released from custody after a felony conviction, including people who are discharged from parole, a document certifying that they are "not barred from becoming an elector due to a previous felony conviction."

This document will alert formerly incarcerated people to the fact that they can register to vote, despite their record. One of the greatest barriers to formerly incarcerated people's enfranchisement is the lack of public awareness of the issue. Due to the many misconceptions about disenfranchisement based on a criminal record, it is important to ensure that people being released from incarceration, including those being discharged from parole, understand their rights. Experts estimate that millions of formerly incarcerated people nationwide may be disenfranchised due to misunderstanding or confusion about disenfranchisement law in their states. We believe this bill would help to counteract that problem by

clarifying Connecticut's laws, and that the bill's net effect would be greater encouragement for formerly incarcerated people to register to vote and participate as active electors in our democracy.

This bill, combined with the Government Administration and Elections Committee's House Bill 5418, An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Felony Convicts Who Are on Parole, which would restore people on parole's rights to vote, are meaningful ways to empower people to exercise their fundamental civic right to vote. They would also put Connecticut closer in line with other New England states, including Maine and Vermont, which protect incarcerated people's rights to vote.

The ACLU-CT encourages the committee to support this bill, which will help formerly incarcerated people and people being discharged from parole to understand their right to vote.