



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting  
Senate Bill 22, An Act Concerning Payment of Certain  
Fines Prior to the Restoration of Electoral Privileges**

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 22, An Act Concerning Payment of Certain Fines Prior to the Restoration of Electoral Privileges.

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 remove the condition that someone pay all fines that were charged along with their conviction before the state restores their right to vote.

Being able to vote in elections is an incredibly important right that should not be denied to someone simply because they were convicted of a crime. More than six million Americans are currently disenfranchised due to a felony conviction. Laws that disenfranchise people because of felony convictions disproportionately disenfranchise Black Americans. In many states, they were in fact intended to have this racist effect; the modern practice of felony disenfranchisement became particularly widespread in the Jim Crow era, and after

Reconstruction, white lawmakers codified felony disenfranchisement laws that explicitly targeted Black Americans to diminish their electoral strength.

It is time for Connecticut to remove a large barrier formerly incarcerated people face in restoring their voting rights, the requirement to pay the fines imposed along with their conviction. Voting, a cornerstone of our democracy, should be accessible and free to all eligible voters. With this requirement in place, however, the state is charging members of the public to exercise their rights, forcing some Connecticut residents to pay a fee to enter the ballot box. The right to vote should not be conditioned on the financial ability to pay a fine. Our friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbors who are living with a criminal conviction on their record deserve to cast their vote as much as anyone else, despite their ability to pay fines.

This bill, combined with the Government Administration and Elections Committee's Senate Bill 25, An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Felony Convicts Who Are on Parole, which would restore people on parole's right to vote, are meaningful ways to empower people to exercise their fundamental civic right to vote.

The ACLU-CT encourages the committee to support this bill, which will help people living with criminal records participate in our democracy.