



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 358,
An Act Concerning Employee Voting Opportunities**

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees 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 358, An Act Concerning Employee Voting Opportunities.

The right to vote is a fundamental part of America's democracy, and the government should work to ensure that everyone has access to the ballot box. As an organization that defends the right to vote and believes that enfranchisement is an incredibly important way for people to participate in our society, the ACLU-CT supports this bill, which would require employers to grant an employee, at their request, at least four hours during their work day to vote on Election Day.

Requiring employers to give their employees time to vote during their work day would improve voter turnout. Having the opportunity to take four hours away from work on Election Day would allow employees more time to travel to their polling locations; register to vote, if needed; and vote.

While this bill would be good for everyone, it would be particularly helpful for people who are vulnerable to disenfranchisement because of physical disabilities, lack of transportation, unpredictable work schedules, or other limitations. A study of Ohio voters found that women, the elderly and the poor are most likely to take advantage of early voting because voting on Election Day can be very difficult for them. Having four hours off of work would help these populations get to the polls. A separate national study found that Black and Latino voters are between two to three times more likely than white voters to wait more than 30 minutes

to vote in person at their polling places. If these voters were allowed four hours of their work day to vote on Election Day, it would give them more time to vote and have their voices heard.

For many people, it is difficult to find time to vote on a work day while the polls are open. A United States Census Bureau survey found that the main reason 14.3% of people did not vote in the 2016 general election was their busy schedule. According to Pew Research Center, people who did not vote in that election “were more likely to be younger, less educated, less affluent, and nonwhite.”

Requiring employers to allow employees four hours to vote during their work day would place Connecticut in line with states across the nation. Thirty states require employers to give employees time off to vote, while 21 states require paid time off for voting and one requires paid time off to vote for salaried employees. We urge the committee to support Senate Bill 358 to allow more people the opportunity to vote on Election Day.