



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1017, An Act Concerning
Election Administration**

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

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1017, An Act Concerning Election Administration.

As an organization committing to ensuring that every voter who wants to cast a ballot is able to do so, the ACLU-CT supports efforts to eliminate barriers to voting. A free and fair voting system upholds the foundational cornerstone of our democracy: the right to vote. Furthermore, our democracy is strengthened when more people are able to vote. Several of the provisions of Senate Bill 1017 remove barriers to voting and we strongly support them.

As we learned from voting during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, providing voters with more options for casting ballots leads to increased turnout without any significant corresponding problems. One of these options is to provide dropboxes at which people voting by absentee ballot can drop off, rather than mail, their ballots. Allowing drop box ballot return is a practical, reasonable accommodation for people for whom accessing outgoing mail is, for whatever reason, a challenge. The state's experience in the 2020 primary and general election provided a good proof-of-concept for dropboxes. We should expand their use. Accordingly, we support Section of Senate Bill 1017 which provides for permanent use of ballot dropboxes.

We also support the provisions of Section 10 which allows electronic signature on certain elections forms. By providing more people with electronic access to documents, electronic signatures are a component of the critical democratic principle of extending the ability to vote to the most possible people. The use of online forms with electronic signatures could expand voting opportunities for people who are vulnerable to disenfranchisement, including people living with disabilities, those who lack transportation, students, and people who have unpredictable work schedules, who may be less likely to use forms that require ink signatures that are signed in person or mailed. Downsides are minimal, since voter fraud is exceedingly rare.¹

Another accessibility provision is in Section 14 of the bill, which provides greater opportunities for people with visual impairments to use accessible ballots. As Connecticut moves towards granting voters more options of how to vote, it is important to ensure that additional methods contain the same accessibility guarantees that in-person voting should. Impacted people are the experts on what they need to make voting accessible, and we encourage this Committee to consider feedback from people with disabilities and advocacy groups working for them very carefully.

The ACLU-CT takes no position on the remaining provisions of Senate Bill 1017, but still strongly encourages this Committee to report favorably on this bill. It includes a number of important accessibility provisions that ensure more people will have attainable ways of getting ready to vote and of casting ballots.

¹ Justin Levitt, "A Comprehensive Investigation of Voter Impersonation Finds 31 Credible Incidents out of One Billion Ballots Cast." Washington Post (Aug. 6, 2014), *available at* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/08/06/a-comprehensive-investigation-of-voter-impersonation-finds-31-credible-incidents-out-of-one-billion-ballots-cast/>.