



Testimony in Support of H.B. 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting

Government Administration and Elections Committee

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Dear Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

Thank you for accepting this testimony in **support of H.B. 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting** on behalf of Health Equity Solutions (HES), a nonprofit organization with a statewide focus on advancing health equity through anti-racist policies and practices. Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

The American Public Health Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (among others) note the link between health equity and civic engagement, specifically citing voting as an important factor.^{1,2} **Connecticut is only 1 of 4 states with no early voting**, which not only burdens the voting system on Election Day, but also makes it more difficult for Connecticut residents to participate in the electoral process.³

Early voting would make voting more accessible to registered voters who face barriers getting to the polls on election day, such as people of color, people with disabilities, low-income Americans, uninsured people, those without reliable transportation, and young people.⁴ These communities often face multiple barriers to voting, are less likely to vote, and consistently bear the burden of inequities in health.⁵ In particular, Black and Latino/a residents of Connecticut are disproportionately likely to work in low wage, hourly positions, which often have unpredictable schedules and require work outside of traditional work hours.⁶

According to a 2019 Research Report by the RAND Corporation, increased civic engagement is linked to improved health in a mutually reinforcing cycle.⁷ People who vote are more likely to be healthy in the

¹ Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, and Plough A. (2017) *What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?* Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2) <https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

² American Public Health Association. (2022) *Advancing Health Equity through Protecting and Promoting Access to Voting*. <https://www.apha.org/Policies-and-Advocacy/Public-Health-Policy-Statements/Policy-Database/2023/01/18/Access-to-Voting>

³ *Supporting Equitable Early Voting Implementation | ACLU of Connecticut*. (2023). <https://www.acluct.org/en/legislation/supporting-equitable-early-voting-implementation>

⁴ *Supporting Equitable Early Voting Implementation | ACLU of Connecticut*. (2023). <https://www.acluct.org/en/legislation/supporting-equitable-early-voting-implementation>

⁵ *Advancing Health Equity through Protecting and Promoting Access to Voting 20229*. (2022). https://www.apha.org/-/media/Files/PDF/Policy/2022/Advancing_Health_Equity_Access_to_Voting_20229.ashx

⁶ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2021) *The State of Working Connecticut*. https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SOWC-2021_Just-Research.pdf

⁷ Nelson, C., Sloan, J., & Chandra, A. (2019). *Examining Civic Engagement Links to Health: Findings from the Literature and Implications for a Culture of Health*. RAND Corporation. (53) <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR3163>

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future and healthier people are more likely to vote. Voting is one way for people to take action to advance policies that reduce social inequities and promote health equity.⁸ In order to reduce barriers for all communities, polling locations should be close to public transportation, accessible to people with physical disabilities, open at least one Saturday and one Sunday, have consistent hours inclusive of evening and early morning hours, and ensure the ability to register to vote during each day when early voting sites are open.⁹

Voting not only helps decide political leadership, but also can determine the policies that shape the social, economic, and environmental conditions that impact health; when more individuals vote, elected leaders hear from a more representative group of the communities they serve.¹⁰

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of H.B. 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting**. We can be reached with any questions at ksiegel@hesct.org or 860.937.6432.

⁸ Adler, N. E., Glymour, M. M., & Fielding, J. (2016). Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities. *JAMA*, 316(16), 1641. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.14058>

⁹ *Supporting Equitable Early Voting Implementation | ACLU of Connecticut*. (2023).

<https://www.acluct.org/en/legislation/supporting-equitable-early-voting-implementation>

¹⁰ Ehlinger, E. P., & Nevarez, C. R. (2021). Safe and Accessible Voting: The Role of Public Health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(1), 45. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.306011>