



Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of

Senate Bill 184 An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration As A Result Of Covid-19 And Concerning Eligibility To Vote By Absentee Ballot

**Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 4, 2022**

Good afternoon, Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony **in support of Senate Bill 184 An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration As A Result Of Covid-19 And Concerning Eligibility To Vote By Absentee Ballot.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets. Over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$97 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$894 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation supports **civic and resident engagement** in our region.

Community voice and leadership is a priority for the Hartford Foundation, one that runs throughout each of our strategic priorities. Our commitment to civic engagement takes many forms, including support for efforts to increase voting, participation in local government, volunteering or sharing ideas on how resources could be used to make our community a better place. Resident engagement efforts seek to develop resident leadership and opportunities for collective action. The Foundation believes it is vital that policy decisions are informed by a diverse group of residents who are impacted by the actions at City Hall and the State Capitol.

The Hartford Foundation has been committed to engaging voters for several years. In 2018, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving launched its first nonpartisan voter registration initiative. Thirteen community-based nonprofits successfully registered over 1,000 new voters and received 1,500 pledges to participate in the 2018 elections, primarily among populations least likely to participate in elections: young adults, Latinx and Black residents and people living in high poverty neighborhoods.

In 2019, the Hartford Foundation awarded 20 grants totaling \$448,400 to support voter engagement in 2019 and 2020 and Census participation activities. In 2020, amidst COVID restriction requirements, the Foundation provided grants to five organizations to provide additional support for socially distanced civic engagement and voter engagement activities. In 2021, the Foundation awarded \$93,680 to the San Juan Center to support a civic engagement and communication collaborative project focused on Latino Hartford residents.



In 2020, more than 650,000 people safely and conveniently cast their ballots by taking advantage of the no-cost, postage-paid, absentee ballots. While COVID mandates are relaxing, many residents battle ongoing health concerns that preclude them from being in public. **The Foundation supports the extension of absentee ballot procedures and policies included in Senate Bill 184.** Having access to mail-in and drop box voting will allow ensure that more of our residents, particularly those most impacted by COVID-19, remain engaged in civic life.

The Foundation is eager to partner with legislators and advocates to support efforts to ensure that all residents have a voice on critical issues and the solutions that are responsive to and reflective of our entire community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfp.org or 860-548-1888.