



February 4, 2025

Honorable Chairman Berry
NH House Committee on Election Law
Subject: Testimony in Support of New Hampshire CACR 5

Dear Chair and Members of the House Election Law Committee,

For the record, my name is Krysten Evans, and I am the Policy Director for ABLE NH, an organization dedicated to advancing the civil and human rights of individuals with disabilities across New Hampshire. I submit this testimony in strong support to CACR 5, which would amend the New Hampshire Constitution to allow all voters to receive an absentee ballot without requiring an excuse.

For individuals with disabilities, absentee voting is often the most reliable and accessible means of participating in elections. Many disabled individuals face barriers to in-person voting, including transportation difficulties, inaccessible polling places, and health conditions that make public spaces unsafe. The current system, which requires voters to provide a specific reason for requesting an absentee ballot, places an undue burden on those who simply seek equal access to the ballot box.

Research demonstrates that removing unnecessary restrictions on absentee voting increases voter participation, particularly among individuals with disabilities. A report from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission found that in the 2020 election, 11% of voters with disabilities experienced difficulties voting, compared to only 4% of non-disabled voters (Schur and Kruse, 2021). Many of these difficulties stem from inaccessible polling places and the lack of accommodations at in-person voting sites. By making absentee voting universally available, CACR 5 would mitigate these barriers and ensure that disabled voters have an equal opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Some may express concerns about election security when expanding absentee voting access. However, extensive research confirms that absentee voting is both secure and reliable. A comprehensive study by the Brennan Center for Justice found that voter fraud, including fraud related to mail-in voting, is exceedingly rare (Minnite, 2017).

Additionally, states that have implemented no excuse absentee voting, such as Utah, Colorado, and Oregon consistently report secure elections with high voter turnout.

Furthermore, New Hampshire already employs rigorous measures to verify absentee ballots, including signature matching and ballot tracking systems. These safeguards ensure that every vote cast by mail is legitimate while maintaining the integrity of our elections.

Voting is a fundamental right, and the ability to exercise that right should not depend on one's health status, mobility, or access to transportation. The current restrictions on absentee voting disproportionately impact disabled individuals, seniors, and those with caregiving responsibilities. Expanding absentee voting is not only a matter of convenience, it is a matter of equity and justice.

By passing CACR 5, New Hampshire will join the majority of states that recognize that no voter should have to justify their need for an absentee ballot. This amendment would remove an outdated barrier and bring our state's election laws in line with modern principles of accessibility, fairness, and inclusion.

For these reasons, ABLE NH urges you to support CACR 5 and ensure that all New Hampshire voters, including those with disabilities, have a fair and equitable opportunity to participate in our democracy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Krysten Evans

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Sources:

Minnite, Lorraine C. *The Myth of Voter Fraud*. Cornell University Press, 2017.

Schur, Lisa, and Douglas Kruse. "Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections: Final Report on Survey Results." U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Rutgers University, April 2021, www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document_library/files/Disability_and_Voting_Accessibility_in_the_2020_Elections_Final_Report.pdf.

