



February 4, 2025

Honorable Chairman Berry  
NH House Committee on Election Law  
Subject: Testimony in Opposition of New Hampshire House Bill 608

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 opposition to House Bill 608, which would impose additional verification requirements on absentee ballot affidavits, including the requirement for notarization or attestation by an elected official or authorized individual.

Requiring absentee voters to obtain notarization or certification significantly burdens individuals with disabilities, many of whom already face accessibility challenges when voting. The National Disability Rights Network has documented how additional paperwork and procedural barriers disproportionately disenfranchise voters with disabilities (National Disability Rights Network, 2020). The notarization requirement is especially problematic for individuals with mobility impairments, those living in rural areas with limited access to notary services, and voters who rely on home-based care.

Absentee voting provides a critical means of access for individuals who cannot physically travel to polling places due to mobility impairments, sensory disabilities, or cognitive disabilities that make in person voting inaccessible. According to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 11% of voters with disabilities encountered difficulties voting in-person in 2020, compared to just 4% of voters without disabilities (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2021). Imposing additional verification requirements on absentee ballots will deepen these difficulties and could discourage participation.

This bill would increase the administrative burden on election moderators, requiring them to verify notarizations or certifications on every absentee ballot affidavit. Local election officials are already tasked with processing large numbers of absentee ballots under strict deadlines. The New Hampshire Municipal Association has raised concerns in the past

about legislation that adds responsibilities without providing resources or funding to implement them (New Hampshire Municipal Association, 2021).

New Hampshire already has robust absentee ballot security measures, including signature matching, verification of voter registration, and tracking systems. The Brennan Center for Justice has found no evidence that additional notarization or witness requirements meaningfully prevent fraud; instead, they primarily serve to suppress voter participation, particularly among disabled and elderly voters (Minnite, 2010).

House Bill 608 is a solution in search of a problem. It does not enhance election integrity but instead creates significant new barriers for voters with disabilities, disproportionately impacting a population that already faces obstacles to civic participation. I urge the committee to reject HB 608 in favor of policies that expand, rather than restrict, access to the ballot.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krysten Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Krysten Evans

Krysten@ABLENH.org

Sources:

Minnite, Lorraine C. The Myth of Voter Fraud. Brennan Center for Justice, 2010.

National Disability Rights Network. Access Denied: Barriers to Online Voter Registration for Citizens with Disabilities. NDRN, 2020.

New Hampshire Municipal Association. "Testimony on Election Reform Proposals." NHMA, 2021.

U.S. Election Assistance Commission. Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections. EAC, 2021.