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Testimony for the Connecticut Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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I am the Director of the Nancy A Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work and an Instructor in Residence at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. Broadly, we examine the connections between voting and community outcomes, promote civic engagement as an intervention in social work practice, conduct research, advocate to expand voting rights and access, and develop training models to increase political participation within the profession and the communities and populations we serve. Social workers touch 12 million lives a day in organizations, schools, communities and public agencies, and are well positioned to support a more inclusive democracy, including engaging those who have been historically excluded from political power (Abramovitz et al, 2019).

Voting is about relationships, including people's relationship to their government, their relationship and connection to their community, and even their relationship to the person asking them to vote.

My testimony will bring a social work perspective to this conversation in terms of the impact on well-being, political power, and outcomes, as well as the challenges in engaging a population that votes at the lowest rates. I will also share a few preliminary findings from a participatory research study with the Full Citizens Coalition that included focus groups with formerly incarcerated individuals about their experience, attitudes, and beliefs about voting.