To: The Government Administration and Elections Committee

Fr: Sam Oliker-Friedland, Center for Secure and Modern Elections

Re: Support for SB 24 – An Act Concerning Automatic Voter Registration at Certain State Agencies

Good evening, Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, vice chairs, ranking members, and members of the committee. My name is Sam Oliker-Friedland, and I am Chief Counsel at the Center for Secure and Modern Elections. I am testifying in support of codifying, strengthening, and expanding automatic voter registration in Connecticut.

The people of Connecticut and the people in this room care deeply about the integrity, and fairness of our elections. Key to that is ensuring that our voter rolls are complete, accurate, and secure. Automatic Voter Registration – or AVR – does just that. The initiative has been passed in 18 different states across the nation – including New Jersey and Massachusetts – and often through bipartisan majorities. At its core, AVR is about modernizing election systems so that voter rolls are accurate and so every eligible voter can have their voice heard.

AVR takes an interaction with the government that an eligible citizen is already having, such as renewing a driver's license, applying for medicaid, or registering for classes at UCONN, and uses the information they provide in that transaction to automatically register them to vote. It only applies to eligible citizens, and voters will have the opportunity to decline if they so choose.

The benefits are extraordinary:

First, AVR will modernize Connecticut's voting systems. At a time when Connecticut government is taking strides to move into the future, AVR will help reduce duplicate registrations, ensure the most up-to-date registration information, and offer the most accurate voter rolls. As the rest of the country increasingly moves to automatic electronic registration systems, Connecticut should do the same.

Second, AVR will help elections run more smoothly. Moving away from a paper-based registration dramatically reduces the staff time needed to do data entry. With an electronic system, registrars and poll workers expend less time on manual data entry and updating registrations one-by-one, and more time ensuring elections are run efficiently and securely. Time for election officials is indeed a critical resource, and by making the voting registration electronic and automatic, the process becomes more seamless.

Third, it saves money. One study in Arizona showed that it costs $0.83 of staff time to enter a paper voting application into the system, compared to just $0.04 with an electronic system. Across the country, localities have saved an average of about $3.54 in labor costs per registration by moving from a paper to an electronic method. At a time when Connecticut faces a fiscal crisis, and when there seem to be constant cuts to critical services, AVR eliminates the costs of provisional ballots, costly paper transactions, and manual data entry. It's electronic – and it will save towns money after implementation.

Finally, AVR is about basic government efficiency. When eligible citizens interact with State government services, such as the DMV or the HUSKY Health program, they should be able to

benefit from the service they're seeking – and register to vote. Those transactions can also update eligible voters' addresses when they interact with an agency, so they don't need to re-register when they move.

At The Center for Secure and Modern Elections, we work across the country to ensure that all eligible voters are able to have their voices heard and their votes counted. We've seen firsthand the benefits of AVR, and strongly support this common-sense legislation to modernize Connecticut's elections, register potentially hundreds of thousands of new eligible voters, and move Connecticut's election systems into the future. For all of the above reasons, we urge your support of automatic voter registration in Connecticut.