

Dear Co-Chairs Hwang and Osten, Vice Chair Frank, and Honorable Working Group Members,

My name is Alden Okoh-Aduako, and I am an undergraduate student in New Haven. I write to express my support for allowing ranked choice voting (RCV) to be implemented in Connecticut's municipal and party elections.

I've talked with other voters my age, and many have expressed unhappiness with their options on the ballot. Some have hesitated or abstained from voting for this reason, and even those who do vote come away with a sense of dissatisfaction or apathy toward the power of their ballot — especially in less prominent elections like primaries and local contests.

While people usually voice these complaints in respect to the presidential election, these problems stem from voting in party primaries. Under our current plurality voting system, people are incentivized to choose between the two most prominent candidates, lest the worse of the two achieve a plurality and win. Effectively, voters' ballots are restricted to two viable options, forcing many voters to be dishonest and making them feel that there are no good choices. The current system also discourages even somewhat similar candidates from running against each other, lest neither win due to vote splitting. This limits the options that voters have, thus promoting voter dissatisfaction.

RCV solves these problems. Since votes can get reallocated if a minor candidate gets eliminated, voters can express their honest preferences, and similar candidates can run without fear of harming their collective chance of winning. Not only do young voters feel satisfied from being able to actually vote for their first choice, but young voters become more engaged in primaries and off-year local elections – strengthening the civic habits necessary for the future of a healthy democracy.

The current system also allows candidates to win with less clear mandates. In multi-candidate primaries, successful candidates are often challenged as “illegitimate” or “unrepresentative” of their districts. With RCV, winners are guaranteed the strong mandate of majority support.

Thus, I strongly support allowing municipalities and parties to adopt RCV — not just to improve municipal and party elections themselves, but also to help provide better options for elections which get their candidates from party primaries. Furthermore, I'd like to see its adoption not just allowed but also actively encouraged by this working group and the state government.