Dear Members of the Connecticut Governor's Ranked-Choice Voting Working Group,

I am writing to express my strong support for the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Connecticut. As a resident who values fair and representative elections, I believe that RCV offers improvements over the current system in allowing voters to express their preferences. RCV provides several key benefits:

1. Enhanced Voter Choice: RCV empowers voters to choose multiple candidates, reflecting a broader spectrum of preferences. This reduces the pressure to vote strategically and encourages voters to support candidates they genuinely believe in.

2. Majority Support: By ensuring that the winning candidate has majority support, RCV helps to elect officials with broad support who can represent the will of the electorate well. This can potentially lead to greater satisfaction and trust in the electoral process.

3. Mitigation of Spoiler Effect: RCV eliminates the spoiler effect, where similar candidates split the vote, potentially leading to the election of a less preferred candidate. This ensures constituents can freely vote for the candidate that they feel best reflects their personal views without worrying that they are "wasting" their vote.

4. Encouragement of Diverse Candidates: By providing a more level playing field, RCV encourages a diverse range of candidates to run for office, knowing that they have a fair chance of success even if they are not the initial frontrunner.

For the above reasons, I believe that RCV would improve the voting process in the state of Connecticut. I also believe that RCV offers a potential solution, if widely implemented in the United States, to help resolve some of the problem of voter disillusionment with a two party system, where voters sometimes feel that neither of the two strategically viable candidates reflects their views. Connecticut (CT) has the opportunity to be one of the leading states to implement RCV at the federal level, and it is an opportunity I believe the state should pursue.

While CT has an opportunity to be a leader in RCV, there is precedent. The state of Maine has used RCV since 2018 and Alaska used it in the 2022 at-large congressional district special election. Additionally, many municipalities across the United States have implemented RCV, as well as other countries (e.g., Australia).

Articles by RankedVote[1] and FairVote[2] do a nice job of outlining the pros of RCV, and explaining why some of the commonly discussed concerns with RCV, such as ballot confusion, are misplaced. For instance, in Maine, after the 2018 primaries, in which most voters participated in RCV for the first time, 90% of voters said their experience was "excellent" or "good."[3] Moreover, sample ballots from Maine reinforce that the process is not overly complicated.[4]

One additional benefit of RCV is that in some cases it can eliminate the need for runoff races, which often have lower turnout and can be expensive. A good "case study" to highlight this is a comparison between the 2022 Senate races in Georgia and Alaska. In Georgia, a runoff was needed, which had 11% lower turnout than the original election. The runoff was held 4-weeks

after the general election leading to a large lag in when a winner was declared, and it cost taxpayers $75 million. In contrast, in Alaska, where RCV was in place, the election results were known at the end of the 15-day period required to receive absentee ballots. Because no runoff election was needed, the turnout was the same as the general election, and there was no additional cost to ratepayers.[5]

In conclusion, RCV offers an inclusive way for voters to express their preferences that is an improvement from the status-quo. It enhances voter choice, ensures majority support, mitigates the spoiler effect, and encourages diverse candidates. I urge the working group to support the adoption of RCV in Connecticut to strengthen our democracy and better reflect the will of the people.

Specifically, while I support any implementation of RCV, I recommend using RCV for primary elections and elections for federal offices, as is done in Maine. For CT primary elections, I recommend a format of RCV where the top 2 candidates from each party advance to the general elections. This format recommendation is contingent upon the use of RCV for state general elections, which I also support. I acknowledge that a CT constitutional amendment may be needed to implement RCV for state general elections, as opined by Attorney General William Tong, and support such an amendment as required.[6]

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vanessa DeBarge, BSN, RN

CT Resident