A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS AND TREATMENT FOR ALL IN SUBMITTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS FOR THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Whereas, in-person voting during the 2020 general election poses increased personal health risks due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, the North Carolina State Board of Elections projects that approximately 30% to 40% of voters will vote by mail-in absentee ballot for the upcoming 2020 general election; and

Whereas, Article 21A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes, cited as the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act, provides for absentee registration and voting in primary and general elections for certain military personnel and families and civilians living overseas in compliance with the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff, et seq.; and

Whereas, those individual voters have the option to vote by mail-in absentee ballot without having to obtain a signature from two witnesses or one notary attesting that the voter completed the ballot; and

Whereas, those individual voters covered by Article 21A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes may submit their ballots with a declaration signed by the voter, affirming the voter's identity eligibility; and

Whereas, all eligible voters should be given the same option as military personnel for absentee voting; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding G.S. 163-231(a) or any other provision of law to the contrary, for the 2020 general election, the State Board of Elections shall provide all eligible voters in this State the option of submitting their mail-in absentee ballots with a declaration signed by the voter similar to the option afforded to covered citizens through special programs under Article 21A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes. Voters are not required to comply with requirements more stringent than those required for submitting mail-in absentee ballots under Article 21A of the Chapter 163 of the General Statutes for the 2020 general election.

SECTION 2. This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to elections held on or after that date and expires upon certification of the 2020 general election.