

Testimony in Support of H 5600

Delivered by John Marion on behalf of Common Cause Rhode Island

In 2017 Rhode Island became only the second state in the nation to require regular risk-limiting audits. That legislation, drafted by Common Cause Rhode Island, unfortunately contained an error. As enacted the statute does not allow the Board of Elections to conduct a risk-limiting audit on any contest for the General Assembly. H 5600 fixes that mistake, and that is why Common Cause Rhode Island supports the bill.

Risk-limiting audits are the most efficient method for catching and correcting incorrect election outcomes caused by misfeasance or malfeasance. They are conducted by hand examining a randomly selected sample of ballots in a particular contest. If the sample reveals inconsistencies with the tabulation of the voting equipment additional samples are taken until either the risk-limit is met, or a full manual tally has occurred. If the audit results in a full manual tally the results are used to certify the election.

Risk-limiting audits are considered the gold standard of post-election audits, and since 2017 Rhode Island has become a pioneer in their use. The state Board of Elections conducted their first live audit in June 2020 on the Presidential Preference Primary and also conducted an audit on the presidential election in November 2020, confirming the outcome of both contests.

As Rhode Island continues to refine the process for risk-limiting audits, we expect the Board of Elections will begin to audit additional down-ballot races. This legislation will allow the Board of Elections to audit General Assembly contests. Common Cause Rhode Island urges you to pass H 5600 so that Rhode Island remains a leader in election administration and security.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

