



March 11, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair

House Committee on Judiciary

Rhode Island Statehouse

Providence, 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 5300 - An Act Relating To Criminal Offenses – Threats and Extortion

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we proudly support House Bill No. 5300, which advances equity and social justice for all Rhode Islanders by protecting the people who safeguard our democracy. Through the ADVOCATE UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we are dedicated to breaking down systemic barriers and championing policies that protect civic participation and strengthen trust in our institutions.

House Bill No. 5300 is crucial to building a more inclusive and fair Rhode Island. This legislation ensures that election officials and poll workers are classified as “public officials” under the law, affording them the same legal protections from threats and intimidation as other public servants. As the frontline workers of our electoral system, these individuals make our democracy function—and they deserve protection from violence, coercion, and harassment.

Recent national data from the Brennan Center for Justice reveals that 1 in 6 election workers have experienced threats because of their job, and 77% say they feel these threats have increased in recent years. These statistics reflect a troubling national trend that has impacted even local jurisdictions. When election workers are intimidated or threatened, it creates a chilling effect on civic engagement, public trust, and the integrity of the voting process itself.

Protecting the individuals who ensure our elections run smoothly—especially at the community level—is essential to preserving free and fair elections in Rhode Island. By including poll workers and election officials under the umbrella of public official protections, House Bill No. 5300 affirms our state’s commitment to defending democratic processes and the people who uphold them.

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

Equity is the foundation of a just society. Supporting House Bill No. 5300 will help ensure that all Rhode Islanders have a fair and equal opportunity to engage in democracy without fear or intimidation. This legislation is vital to creating a more inclusive and just Rhode Island where everyone—from voters to poll workers—can participate safely and with dignity. We strongly encourage your support in advancing policies that uphold racial and social justice for all.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island