



March 3, 2026
The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL H 7434 – RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES

Chair McEntee and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we strongly support H 7434. This bill would prohibit federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employees, agents, or officials from being within two hundred feet (200') of any polling place while voting is being conducted.

United Way's policy and advocacy work is guided by our strategic framework: Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way. Under our Strong Families pillar, we support policies that strengthen household stability and reduce barriers to opportunity. Safe, accessible voting is one of the essential civic systems that connects families and communities to representation, public resources, and accountability—and voters must be able to participate without fear or intimidation.

The need for clear safeguards at polling places is well established. Federal law prohibits intimidation, threats, and coercion that interfere with a person's right to vote, and the U.S. Department of Justice has emphasized that protections against intimidation apply throughout the voting process. (U.S DOJ, 2025). Policy research also shows that intimidation, whether real or perceived, can deter participation and suppress turnout, particularly for communities already facing barriers to civic engagement. (Brennan Center for Justice, 2025 & Movement Advancement Project, 2022).

H 7434 is a straightforward, preventative measure. By establishing a clear buffer zone that keeps ICE personnel away from polling places during voting, the bill helps reinforce voter confidence, reduce the risk of intimidation or interference, and protect the integrity of the voting environment.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for H 7434. Protecting a safe voting environment strengthens civic participation and supports stronger, more stable communities across Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean
Manager, Government Relations & Policy
United Way of Rhode Island