



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Bill Nos.: Acts Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure – Courts:
HB 8045 - Family Court
HB7641 – Judicial Selection
HB 8045 – Judicial Selection
HB 8049 – Judicial Selection

Committee: House Committee on Judiciary

Date: April 9, 2026

The Rhode Island Women’s Bar Association (“RIWBA”) is a non-profit organization that promotes the advancement of the status of women in the State of Rhode Island and in the legal profession.

RIWBA supports the passages of HB8045, HB7641, HB8048, and HB8049, all of which attempt to create a more transparent magistrate and judicial selection process in Rhode Island. The selection of judicial officers is a difficult process, and there are many factors to take into account when appointing members of the bench; litigation experience, a fair and empathetic temperament, legal aptitude, and familiarity with the judicial system are just a few examples of the qualities any aspiring jurist should possess. In addition, it is important to ensure that the judiciary reflects the diverse populations who appear in our courts on a daily basis. As attorneys, the members of the RIWBA have a vested interest in ensuring that the Rhode Island courts are staffed by a wide variety of learned and capable judges.

Accordingly, we are in support of any efforts to standardize and improve the transparency of the process. We are particularly interested in ensuring that the women attorneys in Rhode Island are fairly represented on the Rhode Island state courts. We believe that passage of the following bills would represent a step towards further transparency and a more robust and equitable selection process: HB8045 (which would bring the Family Court Magistrate selection process in line with the nomination and selection processes of the others courts), HB7641 (which would require judicial candidates to resubmit applications every five years and limit the selection of nominees to those on the list for the particular court under consideration), HB8048 (which would allow the R.I. Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness, in consultation with the R.I. Bar Association and its Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to appoint members of Judicial Nominating Committee (JNC) in certain circumstances, and require judicial candidates to disclose political donations), and H8049 (which would require the JNC to establish standardized merit-based selection process).

In short, the RIWBA is aware that perfecting our magistrate and judicial selection process requires a consistent re-evaluation and fine-tuning of our methods. We believe that the passage of these four bills will help ensure a more transparent and equitable system, which will, in turn, encourage a more robust and diverse application pool. We encourage the Committee to support these bills and help ensure Rhode Island’s continued progress in this area.

For these reasons, RIWBA respectfully urges the Committee to favorably consider these bills.

RIWBA contact:

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair, Jennifer L. Sylvia

riwbalegiscomm@gmail.com