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*Cranston Board of Canvassers
City Hall
869 Park Ave., Room 100
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Jan. 25, 2022

Re: Testimony in Favor of H-6661, An Act Related to Elections – Primary Election Dates

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections:

I am writing on behalf of the City of Cranston Board of Canvassers **in strong support of H-6661**, which would ensure that, going forward, statewide primaries are not conducted immediately following a federal holiday, and are instead held on the very next business day.

In 2018, due to Rosh Hashanah, the Rhode Island statewide primary election was successfully held on a Wednesday. That move also ensured local and state election officials had adequate time and access to correctly set up hundreds of polling locations, including 30 in Cranston.

The logistics – and significant overtime cost – of having to set up so many polling locations, a process which takes a full 15-hour day to complete, is overly complicated and compromised if it must occur on a federal holiday. This is because many of those locations require staff to be present to greet set-up crews and grant access to the facility, including at public facilities like schools and libraries, as well as at private clubs, churches, and social halls.

Furthermore, the elections calendar, under state law, is set up explicitly for the day prior to an election to be a business day – hence the 4 p.m. emergency voting and mail ballot deadline the **day before** an election. These deadlines falling **on** Labor Day forces them, by law, to shift to the **day of the election itself**, causing significant and conflicting voting and ballot security concerns.

In 2020, despite facing unprecedented challenges from COVID-19, local election officials had to open town and city halls to the public on Labor Day, and simultaneously set up polling places, at great cost while facing major logistical hurdles. Many polls could not be accessed on Labor Day, so were set up on Friday before the primary – not at all ideal for voting equipment security.

We strongly encourage the legislature to pass H-6661 to improve our elections administration process and minimize these avoidable expenses and burdens for municipalities. Similarly, the legislation was supported by a unanimous vote of the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks Association, comprised of clerks and elections officials in all 39 municipalities. I am available at 401-780-3128 to elaborate further, or answer any questions members may have. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections