

Testimony from Jordan Day, Policy Director
H 6661 – Primary Election Dates
House Committee on State Government & Elections – January 27, 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns supports H 6661, which would move the date of a primary election to Wednesday if it would otherwise fall on the Tuesday after Labor Day. This small change would greatly assist local election administrators in planning for elections. Normally, election administrators use the Monday before an election for important planning and operations, such as setting up polling locations, conducting walk-throughs, reviewing plans with staff and transporting mail ballots, among others. When the Monday before an election day is a holiday, cities and towns need to keep their city/town halls open and pay staff overtime for up to twelve hours or more for election operations. Furthermore, some polling places may be closed because of the holiday, making it harder for elections personnel to transport equipment and signage to the locations. Ultimately, these lead to higher costs to cities and towns and make it more difficult to ensure the smooth conduct of the election.

The League has worked closely with the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks Association on this issue, and we know that this legislation enjoys broad support among clerks and elections administrators. They have successfully conducted three safe and secure elections – with one more under way – during a pandemic, and this legislation would be a small but significant way for the General Assembly to help them ensure the efficient functioning of future elections. Thank you for your consideration of our views.