

**Randall A. Jackvony**  
Chairperson

**Nicholas J. Lima**  
Registrar / Director of Elections



**Quilcia I. Moronta**  
Member

**VACANT**  
Member

**CRANSTON BOARD OF CANVASSERS**  
**869 PARK AVE**  
**CRANSTON, RI 02910-2786**

Feb. 6, 2023

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Cranston Board of Canvassers Support for H-5305 (School Closure for Presidential Primaries)**

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

I am writing on behalf of the Cranston Canvassing Authority to request the support of the House of Representatives for **H-5305**, an act that would close schools for the conduct of the Presidential Preference Primary. This bill is supported by a **unanimous** vote of the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association.

For a variety of safety, parking, security, voter access, and operational reasons, election officials cannot use schools as polling places while they are in session – it's not good for students, educators, or the voters. As such, existing state law already requires schools to be closed for the conduct of the September Primary and November General Election, every two years. It's a simple oversight that the law does not currently extend to the April Presidential Preference Primary, which occurs only once every four years.

Why is this important? In Cranston alone, there are 26 current polling locations, and **16 of them are schools**. If, for example, in a low-turnout presidential primary, our Board wanted to open 12 polls in the city – two per ward – we would not have enough approved non-school and private facilities available. If we were required to open more locations – such as three per ward, or 18 polls – it would be impossible to do so while school is in session.

But much more importantly, it's just better for the voters. When schools are unavailable, we have to redirect voters to polling locations that are less ideal, smaller, don't have as much parking, and oftentimes are not centrally located for the areas they are intended to serve. Ensuring we have 16 school buildings in the city available for that purpose changes everything: it gives us a plethora of better options to better serve voters. It also saves the city money – private social clubs, churches, and halls often charge us a rental fee, while we fortunately are able to use our school buildings free of charge. These factors are each applicable statewide, to all 39 cities and towns.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 401-780-3128, or via email at [nlima@cranstonri.gov](mailto:nlima@cranstonri.gov). We appreciate your support.

Very truly yours,

Nicholas J. Lima  
Registrar / Director of Elections

Cc: Randall A. Jackvony, Chairperson, Cranston Board of Canvassers