

## Testimony of Common Cause Rhode Island in Support of H 5055--An Act Relating to Elections--General Provisions

Common Cause Rhode Island strongly supports H 5055 that would allow voters who will be 18 years old by the date of the general election to vote in a primary election.

Common Cause was an early and vocal proponent of the 26th Amendment. We believe that young people are an important part of our democracy and should enjoy the right to vote. In Rhode Island we supported the effort to create pre-registration for 16 and 17-year olds.

We believe that S 0035 will encourage participation by the youngest voters. Voters 18-29 turn out at the lowest rate of any age group; at an estimated 27 percent in 2022. That number is the highest for a midterm election in more than three decades. However, in 2022 in Rhode Island voters 18-24 defied the national trend and participated at a lower rate, only 22 percent.

Allowing those who will be 18-years old by the time of the general election to vote in a primary election has several benefits. It makes a habit of voting. Voting in a prior election is a strong predictor of future voting.<sup>1</sup>

In Rhode Island the primary election is often the penultimate election. In 2022 more than 35 percent of Rhode Island offices were uncontested in the general election.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons we believe that allowing those who will be 18 years old by the time of the general election to vote in primaries is good for our democracy and good for Rhode Island.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1540-5907.00038>

<sup>2</sup> See: [https://ballotpedia.org/Election\\_results,\\_2022:\\_Uncontested\\_races\\_by\\_state](https://ballotpedia.org/Election_results,_2022:_Uncontested_races_by_state)