



March 8, 2023

The Honorable, Evan Shanley,
Chair, House Committee on State
Government & Elections
Room 101, Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for 2023 – H 5461 – An Act Relating to Elections – Registration of Voters

Dear Chairman Shanley,

Progreso Latino writes in strong support of 2023 – H 5461 – An Act Relating to Elections – Registration of Voters.

Progreso Latino’s mission is to help Rhode Island’s Latino and immigrant communities to achieve greater self-sufficiency and socio-economic progress by providing transformational programs that support personal growth and social change. All members of our community deserve to be able to participate in local elections as they have a direct impact on them and the community which they live in.

Fifteen municipalities across the country allowed noncitizens to vote in local elections as of February 2023. We believe that residents of our city who live here, work here, go to school here, raise families here, and pay taxes here deserve to have a say in the direction of our city. Noncitizens play an essential role not just in our city but across the country. For example, in New York City noncitizens have been on the frontlines during the pandemic, keeping the city running, providing crucial staff to businesses both small and large and playing a role in keeping New Yorkers healthy. Additionally, legal residents are required to pay taxes, even if they are not citizens. In New York City, that amounts to billions of dollars per year of “taxation without representation.” Additionally, five towns in Massachusetts have also passed resolutions in support of immigrant voting rights.

The naturalization process is so complicated that people often have to hire and pay for lawyers to help navigate it. People have to pay thousands in fees and it can take 6-8 years to complete the process, and it’s only getting longer. The average time just to process an application has doubled since 2014. Five towns in Massachusetts have also passed resolutions in support of immigrant voting rights.

Thank you to Representative Sanchez and his co-sponsors for their leadership, and thank you to the honorable members of the House Committee on State and Government Elections for your consideration of this impactful legislation.



Sincerely,

Michelle Rivera, MSW
Policy Director
Progreso Latino
401-728-5920 ext. 165

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State and Government Elections
The Honorable Representative Enrique Sanchez