

Honorable Representatives,

Testimony of Harry Roth
Project Manager, Stop Ranked-Choice Voting Coalition

Rhode Island House Bill 7540

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit my written testimony.

Ranked-choice voting is often sold as a way to heal our divisions and allow voters to choose candidates they truly align with. But this couldn't be further from the truth.

A major recurring issue with this system is ballot exhaustion. Under ranked-choice voting, if a voter chooses to rank a candidate who is eventually eliminated and no other candidate is ranked, that voter's ballot gets discarded. This is no small problem.

A recent study conducted by Princeton University professor Nolan McCarty found that minorities, specifically African Americans and Alaskan natives, were more likely to have their ballot discarded. NAACP's New York chapter president, Hazel Dukes, called ranked-choice voting "voter suppression" after NYC's botched mayoral primary in 2021, where over 100,000 ballots were eliminated.

In the District of Columbia, the city's Democratic Party came out against ranked-choice voting in 2021 and again last year in response to a ballot initiative. The party worries that RCV's complexities would suppress voter turnout.

So far, ranked-choice voting has struggled to gain traction in New England. The Massachusetts Attorney General rejected a ballot measure to implement RCV in Boston late last year, and the Connecticut Attorney General declared the system unconstitutional earlier this year. Maine is the only New England state that uses the system statewide.

I encourage all of you to consider ranked-choice voting's negative impact on minority voters and the growing bipartisan opposition to it. Passing ranked-choice voting would disenfranchise thousands of Rhode Islanders.

Thank you again for your time.