



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND  
Canvassing Department  
City Hall - 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
43 Broadway  
Newport, Rhode Island 02840  
[www.cityofnewport.com](http://www.cityofnewport.com)  
Hugh Moren [hmoren@cityofnewport.com](mailto:hmoren@cityofnewport.com) (401) 845-5384

March 25, 2024

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

**Re: Support of House Bill 7879**

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

As Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors and the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to strongly encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 7489, which was introduced on behalf of the State Board of Elections and has the unanimous support of RI Town & City Clerks Association. This bill would require that mail ballot drop boxes be opened thirty-five days prior to election day and twenty days prior to special elections.

Under current law, local boards of canvassers may not open their official drop boxes to receive ballots until twenty days prior to the election. However, proactive voters who request a mail ballot early in the election cycle may have already received their ballot by then, and having voted it, wish to turn it in. Voters became accustomed to the use of official drop boxes during the COVID-19 pandemic and see them permanently installed in their communities. They are frustrated when they try to deposit their ballot in the official drop box, only to find it locked. They then come into the local canvassing offices to complain and learn that we are prohibited by law from opening the boxes more than twenty days in advance even though many ballots arrive well before that day. Voters' reactions vary. They are annoyed, angry about the process, or discouraged to hear this and office staff are forced to have yet another negative interaction with a disgruntled voter. These types of interactions contribute to election officials leaving the profession and to voter dissatisfaction, and they are entirely avoidable.

We strongly urge you to support House Bill 7489. It improves the overall process of voting by mail and leads to less confusion and annoyance on the part of the voter. In turn, election officials have a smoother job and improved interactions with their voters. The Newport

Canvassing Authority thanks you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren  
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors  
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors  
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline  
Donato D'Andrea  
Mary Moniz