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Written Testimony in Support of H. 5515

R. I. General Assembly House Committee on State Government & Elections

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Good evening Chairman Evan Shanley and members of the House State Government and Elections Committee. My name is Colten and I am a second-year student at Brown University studying History. I am a member of Brown Votes. I am here to testify in **support of House bill H5515**, which is a step in the right direction towards same-day voter registration for offices beyond president and vice president. I believe this will be strongly beneficial to democracy here in Rhode Island, and mark this great state as a leader of democratic reforms here in the US.

Same-day voter registration allows as many eligible Rhode Island residents to vote as possible. There are many hard-working Americans who—for some reason or another—may not be registered within the current timeline to go vote. This says nothing about how engaged, informed, or excited this potential voter might be. Many people only start to tune into politics as it gets closer to election day. And for this group of unregistered voters, it's completely demobilizing to tell them that they're not allowed to vote because they missed a deadline they didn't know existed. If they haven't registered before, it's likely due to apathy, if not distrust of government. That relationship does not get strengthened with arbitrary deadlines that put them second.

Saying all of that, I feel like you've heard all of this before. Otherwise, the currently existing president and vice-president exemption wouldn't be there. So, additionally, I want to ask, why can't this apply to state offices? If they can vote for federal offices, they should be able to vote for state offices. Separate from the registration requirements are also residency requirements here in Rhode Island. These requirements are not filtering for good politics, they're filtering voters away from full democratic participation.

As a student at Brown University and member of Brown Votes, I strongly believe bill H 5515 should be affirmed by this body to benefit all Rhode Island voters. I hope that you consider voting for this piece of legislation to continue to aid Rhode Islanders. Thank you very much for your time and consideration on this matter.