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Written Testimony in Support of H. 5515  
R.I. General Assembly House Committee on State Government & Elections

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for having me here today to testify on this important issue **in support of House Bill 5515**. My name is Lillian Gale, and I am a Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee at Brown Votes, the nonpartisan University-sponsored voting and democratic participation initiative of Brown University, where I am a first-year concentrating in Economics and Political Science.

I come to you today not only in my position at Brown Votes but also as a girl from Manahawkin, New Jersey. My small town has a severely apathetic attitude towards the democratic process. What party people vote for is more closely related to generational ties rather than education. As a child, I was never taught how to register to vote or the importance of voting, just that it existed and it's how people got elected. In order to get involved you either had to have a family that was passionate about democracy or find your way on your own—like I did.

That stated everyone deserves the right to vote and the support needed to get there. In today's age, that means getting rid of an arbitrary and restrictive deadline. The 30-day registration deadline is a relic from when voting was a paper-only process. With expanded access to mail-in ballots, online voter registration, and automatic voter registration, it is evident that Rhode Island is not afraid of modernizing, so why stop now?

Most studies have found that same-day registration increases turnout anywhere from three to six percentage points on average<sup>1</sup>. This magnitude of an increase cannot be taken for granted. Supporting voters and giving them adequate access to get registered actively encourages citizens to be educated on and active in our democracy. In this age of stark political polarization, it is imperative to ensure that every citizen is supported in their constitutional right to vote.

Mr. Chairman, if there was ever a time to stand up and protect the American democratic process, it is now. We are entering uncharted territory on the federal level, and we must protect the voices of the people—the future. Allowing same-day voter registration is a step towards modernity and democracy the way it was intended to be—accessible, inclusive, and informed.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Neiheisel, Jacob R., and Barry C. Burden. "The Impact of Election Day Registration on Voter Turnout and Election Outcomes." *American Politics Research*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2012