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Written Testimony in Support of Bill H5515
Regarding the House State Government and Elections
3/18/2025

Good evening Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Nihil Suthy, a second-year student at Brown University studying Computational Biology and one of the Advocacy Chairs of Brown Votes, a nonpartisan university initiative committed to fostering democratic participation. I have written this testimony **in support of bill H5515**, which would move us one step closer to implementing same-day voter registration in the state of Rhode Island.

As a student at Brown University and a member of Brown Votes, I have had the opportunity of helping people from numerous states across the country register to vote during the previous election cycle. Some students were unable to register in their home states because of the restrictive time window that prevented them from voting in the presidential elections. Luckily for them, we were able to help them register in Rhode Island due to same-day voter registration existing for the presidential election.

However, this flexibility does not exist for statewide elections. Rhode Island makes it extremely difficult for incoming students to register in the state and cast their ballots. With the Rhode Island state primary elections coming up in 2026, many incoming freshmen to colleges across Rhode Island will be barred from the ballot due to this state's stringent 30-day voter registration requirement. Many universities don't have their move-in date until late August, which would disqualify incoming students from registering to vote in the Rhode Island primary elections. Moving in can be both an exciting and stressful time, and students can often be unaware that these deadlines to register exist. Why should these students be denied from casting their ballot?

Many of my friends from states such as Connecticut, California, and Colorado have been disincentivized from registering to vote in Rhode Island because of the voter registration laws here, which are among the strictest in the nation. As a resident of Michigan, my friends from back home and I have never run into any problems regarding voter registration and casting our ballots because the state of Michigan allows for same-day voter registration.

With the rapid polarization that our country is heading towards and the pressing issues at the forefront of our ballot today, it's important for young people, including myself, to have the opportunity to make our voices heard. By implementing same-day voter registration in Rhode Island, I believe that college students and other underrepresented populations will have greater access to the voting ballots. I urge you to consider the evidence and testimonies presented to you today and vote in favor of bill H5515.

Thank you for your time and consideration.