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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5515, JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AND PUBLISH AND SUBMIT TO THE ELECTORS A PROPOSITION OF AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION – OF SUFFRAGE March 18, 2025

The ACLU of RI strongly supports this proposed constitutional amendment, which would eliminate the state Constitution's onerous and archaic provision that bars individuals from voting in an election (except for President) unless they have registered to vote at least 30 days in advance. In this day and age, a 30-day registration window is simply an unnecessary and significant barrier to voting opportunities.

As an organization committed to ensuring that all qualified individuals have expansive, appropriate, and equitable opportunities for participation in the franchise, we believe that this amendment would allow the state to both modernize the voting process and make it more convenient and accessible for Rhode Island residents. Even as Rhode Island maintains a 30-day registration time frame, over 20 states have *same-day* registration, including a majority of the New England states, demonstrating how outdated this constitutional provision is.

The modernization of Rhode Island's electoral process should include measures that maximize the ability for voter participation, and this amendment would allow this to happen. As proponents have noted, this proposal does not set any specific timeline for registration, but instead leaves it up to the General Assembly to set the time period. In providing this discretion, it eliminates an unwieldy registration deadline that has long outlived its utility. We therefore fully support bringing this constitutional amendment to the voters for their consideration in 2026.