



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL H-5516 – RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES

Chair Shanley and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 5516, which would enhance transparency and election integrity by requiring the reporting and publication of all write-in votes, regardless of qualification, and ensuring that local boards of canvassers adjudicate write-in votes in contests where the total number of write-ins could impact the outcome.

This legislation represents a critical step in ensuring that every vote cast in our elections is properly accounted for and made available to the public. It requires all write-in votes cast by voters in every race – even if frivolous or for fictional characters to be scanned and posted on the State Board of Elections' website as part of official election results. This way, all Rhode Islanders can view the actual write-in vote cast by every voter, in every contest. By requiring this level of transparency, the bill promotes public confidence in the electoral process and reinforces the principle of open government.

The act further requires local boards of canvassers to meet in a public meeting and adjudicate individual write-ins – in other words, determine the voter's intent – in any race in which the total number of write-ins cast may affect the outcome. We agree with our affiliate members at the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association (RITCCA) and the Cranston Board of Canvassers, who aptly stated: Is it a valuable use of public time and resources for a local board to determine whether or not "Mickey Mouse" and "Mickey A. Mouse" should both be attributed to the same fictional character? In most cases, no – but we agree that vote should still count and still be published as part of official results. And, in cases where the total write-ins cast in a contest may affect the election outcome, the local board would, in fact, have to meet publicly and make that individual determination for each and every write-in vote cast.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns believes that House Bill 5516 will strengthen local election procedures, improve transparency, and enhance voter confidence. We urge the Committee to support this legislation and move it forward for passage.

Thank you for your consideration, and we appreciate your commitment to fair and transparent elections in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House State Government and Elections Committee