



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND  
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March 14, 2024

The House State Government & Elections Committee  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support of House Bill 5517**

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the House State Government & Elections Committee,

As the Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors and the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 5517, which would help to conduct our elections process more efficiently by modifying language related to the voter precinct cap.

This bill is supported by the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association, the State Board of Elections, the Secretary of State, and the RI League of Cities and Towns. In past sessions, we note that Common Cause RI, the RI Commission for Human Rights, and numerous local boards of canvassers, have all testified in favor of this legislation. Similar bills to increase the cap to 3,500 have twice passed the House of Representatives, including unanimous passage by the House in 2023 (70-0), which we note and sincerely appreciate.

This legislation increases the maximum number of registered voters that can be assigned to a precinct from not substantially more than 3,000 to 3,500. This change is long overdue, as due to the advent of early voting in 2020, and increased use of mail ballots since 2016, at least one-third of voters no longer use precinct polls on Election Day.

Failure to raise the cap means that any existing poll that exceeds the cap will be required to be split up into two precincts. This means that half of the voters – accustomed to going to their usual poll – would have to go to a new, potentially farther away and less ideal poll, which also has to be staffed and supplied at significant cost of resources for election offices. In Newport, the only precinct currently in danger of this is Pell Elementary School, with 2978 voters as of March 14, 2025, but there are a number of communities statewide who face similar issues with multiple polling locations. In many cases, there is not an additional suitable location within a new precinct to serve as an ADA-compliant polling place should the cap on the original poll be exceeded. Local boards may have to work with the State Board of Elections to locate a new polling place out of precinct, further complicating the process for voters on election day.

To prevent these foreseeable problems, we strongly urge you to support this bill and raise the precinct cap to 3,500 voters. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren  
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors  
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors  
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline  
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