



BARRINGTON
RHODE ISLAND

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March 15, 2025

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-5709 (Permanent Mail Ballot Applications)

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

I am writing to request the support of the House for H-5709, an act that would modernize how local boards of canvassers process permanent mail ballot applications. This bill is supported by the RI Town and City Clerks' Association, RI Board of Elections, RI League of Cities and Towns, and Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore, among other organizations.

H-5709 updates the permanent mail ballot application statute, which was inadvertently left unaddressed when other mail ballot and application-related procedures were updated in previous sessions via enacted legislation. The notary requirement to simply be put on a list to receive a paper application in the mail is wholly unnecessary and is accordingly stricken by this legislation.

This is a good bill for voters who are elderly, homebound, have a disability, or otherwise are unable to get transportation to a polling location or early voting site and need to vote from home via a mail ballot, as it allows them to receive an application, which they must still then complete, sign, and mail back, from their local election office – without having to call for each primary and election to request a blank form. There is no need to make these voters, who often lack resources and transportation, to go through extra hurdles simply to receive a blank paper application form – a form that anyone can already download and print at will from state election websites.

This legislation simply streamlines the process for these voters, which only represent a small fraction (in most cases, less than 10%) of mail ballot voters, so that these voters can easily access this service from local canvassing authorities and receive the application that they need to still complete and return to their local election office.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions on this legislation, please contact Nick Lima, Elections Committee Chair for the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association at 401-780-3128, or via email at nlima@cranstonri.gov.

We appreciate your support.

Very truly yours,

Meredith J. DeSisto, CMC
Barrington Town Clerk

Cc: Nick Lima, Elections Committee Chair for RITCCA