



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government and Elections

RE: H5711 - An Act Relating to Elections – Mail Ballots & H5387 - An Act Relating to Elections – Mail Ballots

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter regarding House Bill 5711 (Brien) and House Bill 5387 (Roberts), legislation requiring mail ballot and emergency mail ballot applicants to provide proof of date of birth and either a Driver's License or State Identification number on the mail ballot or emergency mail ballot application but with suggested amendments. The Department of State supports requiring additional information from voters on mail ballot applications but has concerns on how these bills limit the type of information a voter can present.

The Department of State is committed to enfranchising voters and ensuring they have the right tools and opportunities that will facilitate their civic participation – as written, this legislation impedes this premise. This legislation will disenfranchise voters who do not have a Driver's License or State ID since they will not have access to a mail ballot. We believe that all voters, regardless of those without a Driver's License or State Identification, should be eligible to vote. I suggest adding the ability to provide the last four digits of a voter's Social Security number and a fail-safe provision for those who do not possess that information to ensure all voters can vote by mail.

Furthermore, the legislation requires documentation of a voter's date of birth, which the Department takes to mean a certified copy of a voter's birth certificate. Requiring a certified copy of a birth certificate and possession of a Driver's License or State Identification amount to a poll tax, as these forms of identification all have an associated cost to acquire. I believe this language should be removed.

Finally, we suggest that the legislation require the local boards of canvassers to accept a mail ballot application if one of the following pieces of information on the mail ballot application matches the information in the Central Voter Registration System (CVRS): driver's license number, state ID number, last four digits of the Social Security number, or the voter's signature.

We are happy to work with this Committee and Representative Brien and Representative Roberts to incorporate the suggested alternatives in a Sub A. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregg M. Amore".

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections
The Honorable Jon Brien
The Honorable Sherry Roberts

State House, Room 218, Providence, RI 02903

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