



STATE of RHODE ISLAND
Executive Department
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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Legislative Impact Statement

To: Chairperson Representative Shanley
From: Elisabeth Hubbard, Executive Secretary
Re: 25 House 5523 AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -
- OPEN MEETINGS

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities' Legislation Committee has developed a Legislative Impact Statement on the bill listed below. The Commission would be pleased to present testimony to the committee. Please contact me (462-0110) for additional information.

The Commission finds this bill beneficial.

Our state enacted the Open Meetings Laws in order to ensure that all Rhode Islanders are able to access their government. We value openness, transparency, and the equal opportunity for all Rhode Islanders to participate in the decisions that govern their lives. This bill will enable more Rhode Islanders to access the meetings where decisions are made about their rights, taxes, schools, and communities.

R.I.G.L. 42-87-2, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation, and the Americans with Disabilities Act all require effective communication for people with disabilities. While the term effective communication can vary based on a particular situation and an individual's understanding, ASL is the most effective form of communication for someone who uses ASL as their primary form of communication. It is important to remember that for most people who rely on ASL to communicate, ASL is their first language and English is their second. Understanding written English in captioning or CART reporting can therefore be difficult to follow, especially in a meeting situation. By providing ASL interpreting when requested, ASL users are able to understand what is being said in the meeting and have full access. Without it, even with captioning, there would not be an equal level of access.