



# OCEAN STATE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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Subject: Support for H 7007-Extending electronic voting under the Uniformed & Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

Dear Representative Evan Shanley and Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee

On behalf of the Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), I write in strong support of H 7007 (LC003125), legislation that would extend and continue Rhode Island's authorization of electronically transmitted mail ballots for eligible disabled voters and voters covered under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

Founded in 1988, The Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) is Rhode Island's (RI) Go-To Resource Center for disability information, resources, and services. We are a statewide, consumer-directed organization dedicated to advancing the independence and full community participation of people with disabilities. Access to the ballot is a cornerstone of that mission. The ability for eligible disabled voters to receive and return ballots electronically is not a convenience—it is a critical accessibility measure that ensures equal participation in the democratic process.

Since its initial enactment in 2022, Rhode Island's electronic ballot transmission system has provided voters with disabilities the ability to vote independently, privately, and confidentially, consistent with the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the federal Rehabilitation Act, Section 508. Without this option, many voters with disabilities would be forced to rely on third parties to mark or return their ballots, undermining voter privacy and personal autonomy.

H 7007 appropriately preserves these essential protections while maintaining rigorous election security standards. The bill requires independent security reviews, adherence to National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity frameworks, and oversight by the Secretary of State. These safeguards demonstrate that accessibility and election integrity are not competing interests, but complementary priorities.

The expiration of these provisions, creates unnecessary uncertainty for voters who rely on accessible voting technology. Allowing the authorization to lapse would represent a step backward for disability rights and voter access in Rhode Island. Extending these provisions ensures stability, predictability, and continued compliance with federal accessibility mandates.

OSCIL respectfully urges the Committee to support H 7007 and advance this legislation. Doing so affirms Rhode Island's commitment to inclusive elections and to the fundamental right of all eligible voters to participate fully, independently, and with dignity.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on issues affecting voters with disabilities.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Beth Pinkham*

Beth Pinkham, Associate Director