



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 7091 – AN ACT RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- GENERAL PROVISIONS

Chair Shanley and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we write to express concerns regarding House Bill 7091, which would allow individuals who are at least sixteen (16) years of age to register to vote and to vote in school committee elections in municipalities where school committees are elected.

The League recognizes and appreciates the intent behind this legislation. Encouraging civic engagement among young people and fostering an early interest in public service and participation in local government are commendable goals. Rhode Island's cities and towns benefit when students take an active interest in their communities, and many municipalities already promote youth engagement through student advisory councils, youth commissions, and other civic education initiatives.

However, the League has concerns about several practical and policy implications associated with implementing a separate voting age for a single category of municipal elections.

First, the proposal could create administrative and operational challenges for local election officials. Municipal boards of canvassers would need to maintain a separate class of eligible voters who may participate in school committee elections but not in other municipal, state, or federal elections appearing on the same ballot. In municipalities where school committee elections occur concurrently with other races or ballot questions, this could require additional ballot styles, poll worker training, and voter verification procedures, all of which could increase complexity and costs for local election administration.

Second, establishing a distinct voting eligibility standard for one municipal office raises broader questions about consistency within the state's election framework. Currently, the voting age for municipal, state, and federal elections is eighteen (18), creating a uniform and well-understood standard. Introducing a different threshold for school committee races could lead to confusion among voters and election officials alike.

Finally, while students are directly impacted by decisions made by school committees, those decisions are also closely tied to broader municipal governance and fiscal policy. School budgets, capital investments, and long-term planning decisions often intersect with municipal finances and property tax structures that affect the entire community. As such, school committee elections are deeply integrated into the overall system of local governance.

For these reasons, the League believes that additional discussion and consideration with municipal officials and election administrators would be beneficial before advancing a policy change of this nature.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns appreciates the Committee's consideration of these concerns and remains available as a resource should you wish to discuss the practical implications for municipalities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide further information or assistance

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House State Government and Elections Committee