



Representative Evan Shaley
House State Government & Elections Committee

March 19, 2026

Support for H7303 and H7453

Chair Shanley and Members of the Committee,

Rhode Island Working Families Power writes in strong support of **H7303 and H7453**.

Working Families Power advocates for policies that allow people to provide for themselves and their families and contribute to their communities and promote justice and compassion for all residents, and these bills help achieve those goals.

H7303 would allow eligible Rhode Islanders to register to vote and cast a ballot on the same day, including on Election Day itself. Under current law, voters must register weeks before an election, a deadline that often excludes people who have recently moved, experienced life disruptions, or simply become engaged in civic life close to an election. Same-day registration removes a procedural barrier that has no meaningful justification in an era of real-time data systems and serves primarily to reduce participation among younger voters, renters, and communities of color who are more likely to face last-minute registration challenges.

States that have adopted same-day registration consistently see higher voter turnout without any documented increase in fraud or administrative failure. Rhode Island already maintains a robust voter rolls system, and adding same-day registration would bring the state in line with the majority of New England states that already offer this option. Expanding access to the ballot is not a partisan question—it is a matter of ensuring that every eligible Rhode Islander has a meaningful opportunity to participate in our democracy. H7303 is a straightforward reform that modernizes our elections and reflects the principle that voting should be made easier, not harder.

H7453 would amend the Rhode Island Constitution to establish that every resident has a fundamental right to an education. Although Rhode Island has long funded public schools and

the state courts have recognized certain educational obligations, the absence of an explicit constitutional guarantee leaves that commitment vulnerable to erosion and limits the legal tools available to families and communities seeking to hold the state accountable. A constitutional right to education provides a durable foundation that cannot be quietly walked back through budget decisions or policy changes.

Enshrining education as a constitutional right sends a clear signal that Rhode Island treats learning not as a privilege determined by zip code or family income, but as a basic guarantee owed to every child. States with explicit constitutional education rights have a stronger legal framework for challenging funding inequities and ensuring that all students—regardless of where they live or the resources of their local school district—have access to a quality education. H7453 is an investment in the future of Rhode Island and a recognition that a well-educated population is essential to a just and thriving society.

Together, these bills reflect a commitment to democratic participation and equal opportunity. Ensuring that every eligible Rhode Islander can vote and that every Rhode Island child has access to a quality education are not separate goals—they are two sides of the same commitment to a fair and functioning democracy. We hope the legislature will move them forward so they can be enacted into law.

Thank you,

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler

Progressive Governance Director
Rhode Island Working Families Power