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Testimony on behalf of: House Bill No. 7788: AN ACT RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE (Establishes the Ranked Choice Voting for Rhode Island Presidential Primaries and provides for new sections on ranked choice voting tabulation and results reporting.)

Why I support this bill:

Hello,

My name is Nicholas Helldorfer Cicchinelli. I am a resident of Pawtucket, Rhode Island and I am writing in my capacity as a private citizen to express my strong support for bills H7788 and S2590.

Ranked-choice voting has been demonstrably proven to help elect consensus candidates and prevent “wasted” votes. Ranked-choice voting is also associated with increases in voter turnout, reduced inequities, and improved representation for women and people of color. Polls consistently show that the vast majority of voters – over 90% – of all demographics find ranked-choice voting easy to understand.

According to FairVote research, nearly 10,000 Rhode Islanders cast “zombie votes” – votes for candidates who dropped out between when they turned in their mail ballots and the day of the primary – in the 2016 and 2020 presidential primaries, in addition to a similar situation in the 2023 CD-1 special primary. With ranked-choice voting, voters whose first-choice candidate drops out or is otherwise eliminated have their votes counted for their next choices instead of thrown out, ensuring they are still included in the political process.

The timing of these bills is also important: both major parties will have competitive, wide-open presidential primary fields in 2028. Furthermore, the presidential primary will be conducted on its own ballot, allowing for a critical trial period before final implementation.

I urge you to support bills H7788 and S2590.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Helldorfer Cicchinelli

Pawtucket, Rhode Island