



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
**BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

2000 Plainfield Pike, Suite A, Cranston, RI 02921  
phone: 401-222-2345 | fax: 401-222-3135 | web: [www.elections.ri.gov](http://www.elections.ri.gov)

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley  
Chair, House State Government and Elections Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H7979 An Act Relating To Elections -- Mail Ballots**

Honorable Chairman Shanley and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share the Board's position on House Bill 7979, which is scheduled to be heard by the committee on March 26, 2026. On Feb. 3, the Board voted to submit this proposal to the General Assembly. The bill amends mail ballot procedures by allowing only the voter, immediate family members, or authorized individuals to handle mail ballots. It prohibits candidates or campaign affiliates from possessing or being present during the execution of a voter's mail ballot, with specific exceptions for assistance. These measures ensure a mail voter has the same protections of privacy, as a voter casting a ballot in a voting booth during early voting or at the polls on election day.

The Board of Elections submitted this legislation to address an important balance in our electoral process, and to strengthen the chain of custody of ballots from the point when they are issued by the Secretary of State or by the Board of Canvassers, until they are delivered to the Board for counting. The intent here is not to restrict access, but rather about protecting voters from undue influence, coercion, and the potential for fraud by third parties.

A voter may still easily have their ballot returned by a caregiver, an immediate family member, or a member of their household, and a family or household member can assist a voter even if that family member is a candidate for office. Additionally, the bill explicitly protects voters who require assistance due to blindness, a disability, or an inability to read or write, exactly as they would if casting a ballot during early voting or on election day.



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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Miguel J. Nuñez".

Miguel J. Nuñez  
Executive Director  
Rhode Island Board of Elections

cc: Representative Mary Messier, First Vice Chair  
Representative Arthur J. Corvese, Second Vice Chair  
The Honorable Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee  
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
Steve Sepe, Committee Clerk