

Martha J. Tetreault, *Chair*

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Jeffrey A. Gaulin, *Clerk*

John P. Cunningham, *Member*

CITY OF WOONSOCKET
BOARD OF CANVASSERS AND REGISTRATION
169 MAIN ST P.O. BOX B
WOONSOCKET RI 02895

The Honorable Members of the House
Committee on State Government and Elections
82 Smith St. Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H-7358 – “ An Act Relating To Elections – Conduct of Election and Voting Equipment, and Supplies”

Dear Chairman Shanley and Hon. Members of the Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as an election administrator and on behalf of the Woonsocket Board of Canvassers, urging your support of **H-7358** regarding improvements to write-in ballot procedures. The bill seeks to support accurate and timely reporting of election results by requiring all write-in votes to be published by the state board of elections on its website and requiring the adjudication of write-in ballots by local boards when those votes cast may affect the outcome. The bill is presented on behalf of the Rhode Island Town and City Clerk’s Association with the support of the State Board of Elections and RI Department of State.

The close of an election presents an elections administrator with a litany of tasks that are non-negotiable. Transmit results from every precinct. Receive and secure ballots and official documentation from polls. Deliver the results USB’s to the Board of Elections. Review and adjudicate all provisional ballots and write-ins cast. Return our polls to working order for school, mass, what have you. Compensate our poll workers for their 13-hour day. Provide updates to media. Be responsive to incoming calls and messages from voters and candidates.

Naturally, these tasks are competing for our time, and current statutes dictating the procedure for reporting write-in votes does not make much sense to what we’re trying to accomplish - accurate and timely results reporting.

H-7358 can deliver more accurate results reporting. When a voter places their voted ballot into the DS-200 tabulator at any of Rhode Island’s 400+ voting sites, the tabulator scans

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and securely stores the ballot. The tabulator automatically captures an image of all write-in votes cast, producing a paper and digital report. With passage of **H-7358**, the State Board of Elections would be required to publish this digital report for public review. Additionally, a physical and digital copy would be maintained by the Board of Elections and local Board of Canvassers. The digital report of write-in images is hands-down the most accurate record – more accurate than hand-tabulation.

H-7358 would lead to faster results reporting. As the law stands, local election officials are completing write-in tallies and **provisional ballot adjudication** under the same deadline. Provisional ballots are highly consequential. They are live ballots that have yet to be added to the election results, and can impact the result of a close race. The opportunity cost of manually reviewing each precinct's write-in tape, as is currently mandated by statute, is foregoing time spent on the timely adjudication of provisional ballots.

Accurate and timely election results reporting should be of paramount concern. The opportunity cost of current write-in procedures is significant and avoidable. The State Board of Elections can deliver accurate, timely election results reporting while incurring **no additional costs**. **H-7358** would modernize our election law to reflect existing, untapped capabilities. For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for **H-7358**.

Sincerely,

Giana Savastano

Manager

Woonsocket Board of Canvassers

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