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Testimony in OPPOSITION to H-7380: Prohibits the use of ranked choice voting in all local, state and federal public office elections.

Why I OPPOSE this bill:

April 15, 2026

To: Representative E. Shanley and the Committee

R.I. House State Government & Elections Committee

Greetings Representative Shanley and members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong objection to House Bill 7380 that forbids Ranked Choice Voting in elections in our state. Based on the testimony provided in favor of RCV I don't believe there is a need to explain the process of Ranked Choice Voting. I will, however, address and dispute several talking points put forth by opponents of the ranked choice method.

1. It works fine the way it is (i.e., plurality voting). Such an argument taps into the "It's always how we've done it". What that suggests is a resistance to change and preferring comfort over efficiency. It's cited to be the most dangerous phrase in business. Progress throughout history has relied on those who did not do things as always done. I am especially puzzled as to why this bill focuses on Ranked Choice Voting when there are several other alternative methods. Will we have to go through this each time one is proposed? Importantly, plurality voting has been noted to favor majority parties while minority parties are at a disadvantage. If minority parties want more representation this stands to be a benefit to all.

2. It's too complicated and people will be confused. I am struck by how such a statement disrespects the competence of voters. Just recently a similar statement was quoted in the Journal. It's statement not supported by recent studies. A study of the recent mayoral election in New York City that utilized Ranked Choice Voting revealed 94% of voters found the process to range from very easy to somewhat easy. Other studies have found similar results including voters finding that RCV ballots were more democratic and better able to capture their preferences. Surprisingly, voters with more extreme political views were more satisfied and found RCV to be more democratic and fair.

3. People don't have the time or interest to explore the positions of multiple candidates. RCV does not require choosing more than one candidate, so this argument is specious at best. Secondly, primaries often result in a tie or a need for a runoff. Those who use this argument apparently have no problem with people finding the time to return to a polling place for a runoff election. Runoffs are notorious for decreased voter participation. Importantly, fairvote.org found a 63% decline in voter turnout for runoff elections in 2024. The status quo will push people away from participating in the process while the emphasis should be on engagement.