

## Testimony on H 7451—An Act Relating to Elections—Mail Ballots

### Position: Amend

This legislation would make several changes to Title 17 with respect to mail ballot applications.

We are concerned with the proposed changes that would add to the mail ballot and emergency mail ballot applications only be qualified if the voter provides personally identifiable information (PII) in the form of the last four digits of their social security number or their driver's license/state identification number. We believe that requiring a voter to provide either a drivers license number or the last flier digits of their Social Security number will result in some otherwise eligible voters being unable to vote by mail.

Research indicates that 9 percent of American adults do not have a drivers license. Among those without a license, Black and Hispanic Americans and younger Americans are far less likely to have a license. Also, a small percentage of American citizens do not possess Social Security numbers. Other eligible voters who possess Social Security numbers may not have them readily available when they apply for a mail ballot.

We do not necessarily oppose asking voters to provide this additional PII. When Rhode Island began allowing online applications for mail ballots—a process that requires a drivers license or state ID number—we supported that policy. Having additional PII when qualifying mail ballot applications may result in fewer of those applications being rejected for deficient signatures. But requiring the additional PII without another option for the voter may result in otherwise eligible voters being disenfranchised.

Twelve states require voters to provide either a driver's license number or a partial social security number on a paper mail ballot application. At least four of those twelve allow for a voter to exercise an attentive mechanism for identifying themselves. Indiana allows the voter to provide the number on their voter ID. Pennsylvania allows the voter to provide information from other types of identification. Minnesota allows the voter to attest that they do not possess the required PII. And Virginia allows the voter to submit the application in person. Some states recognize that there needs to be other options for voters. We believe Rhode Island should as well.

Additionally, we believe that the legislation needs to address § 17-20-13 and § 17-20-13.1 that detail what information must be provided on the paper mail ballot and emergency mail ballot paper applications.