

Alissa Kraus
Advocacy Chair at Brown Votes, Brown University Swearer Center
Written Testimony in Support of H.8334
R.I. General Assembly House State Government and Elections Committee

Dear Chairman Shanley,

My name is Alissa Kraus and I am a first-year at Brown University. I am writing to you to urge you to pass the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act. This act is an important measure to ensure the right to vote to all Rhode Islanders, both now and in the future.

We live in uncertain times. All too often, recently, our political landscape has felt hectic, ever-changing, and out of control. During times like these it is incredibly important that we take steps to give people some peace of mind. That is what this act does. It protects Rhode Islanders from potential discrimination and ensures that all will have equal access to the ballot box. It is vital that we do not wait until voting rights come under attack in Rhode Island to take action. Passing this bill will be taking preventative measures against discrimination, which is exactly what this state needs in order to maintain a flourishing democracy.

At a time when voting rights are being restricted across the country—through the SAVE Act, federal seizure of election materials, and law enforcement presence at polling places—it is more important than ever that Rhode Island acts as an example by taking initiative to protect the vote for our citizens. The attacks on voting demonstrate just how fundamental this right is and the importance of taking steps to protect it.

Furthermore, this bill will provide vital language accessibility to non-English speakers so that all Ocean Staters will be able to fully participate in our democracy. Rhode Island is a diverse state that is made stronger by our multitude of life experiences, perspectives, and cultures. Inclusion is not just something we can practice in our social lives, it can also make our democracy stronger and our elections more fair. Provisions like the ones laid out by this bill will help disadvantaged communities have a voice in politics, which will help us all.

I hope that this committee will pass the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act so that we can have an inclusive community and a strong, healthy democracy.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alissa Kraus