



Testimony in Support of H8334
An Act Relating To Elections Rhode Island Voting Rights Act
April 16, 2026

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the Committee,

My name is Awilda Reinoso López, Senior Policy and Research Manager at the Latino Policy Institute. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of H8334.

I also recognize the leadership of the Senate sponsors, including the Senate President, for advancing legislation that strengthens equitable access to the democratic process in Rhode Island.

At LPI, we advance data-driven policy solutions to improve outcomes for Latino communities. Through our research and community engagement, we consistently see that access to voting is not experienced equally particularly for Black, Latino, and other historically marginalized communities.

Rhode Island is a multilingual state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1 in 5 Rhode Islanders speak a language other than English at home, and tens of thousands speak English less than “very well.” In communities like Central Falls, Providence, and Woonsocket, these realities are even more pronounced.

These are real barriers. When voters cannot fully understand ballots or access information in a language they understand, participation is not truly equitable.

H8334 is a necessary step to address these inequities. It establishes protections against voter suppression and vote dilution and creates enforceable standards to ensure equitable access to voting.

The bill also provides a clear, data-informed framework for language assistance, including translated ballots, voter education materials, and bilingual poll workers. These are essential to ensuring meaningful participation.

This legislation builds on a broader historical foundation. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 sought to dismantle systemic barriers that excluded Black communities and other communities of color from full participation in our democracy. H8334 continues that work at the state level.

At its core, this bill affirms a fundamental principle: the right to vote must be equally accessible to all Rhode Islanders. On behalf of the Latino Policy Institute, I respectfully urge you to support and pass H8334. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Awilda Reinoso Lopez
Senior Policy & Research Manager
Latino Policy Institute