

April 15, 2026

House Committee on Judiciary
State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In Support of House Bill H8334 - The Rhode Island Voting Rights Act

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Cassidy Thatcher, and I am a policy fellow with the Women's fund of Rhode Island. I am submitting testimony in strong support of House Bill H8334, The Rhode Island Voting Rights Act.

Language access is one of the most urgent needs in our election system. Rhode Island is home to multilingual communities who deserve clear, accurate election information. In my work, I have seen how untranslated or confusing materials discourage participation. When voters cannot understand a ballot or a polling location change, their right to vote becomes inaccessible to practice. H8334 ensures consistent access to translated materials, bilingual poll workers, and real-time interpretation across the state.

I am also deeply concerned about proposals such as the SAVE Act, which would require multiple forms of identification to vote. These requirements do not strengthen elections, they create new barriers that fall hardest on women, students, elderly voters, and people with limited access to documentation. H8334 provides strong state-level protections regardless of what happens federally.

Federal voting protections have weakened, and Rhode Island must be prepared to protect its own voters. We should not wait for barriers to appear before acting. Nine other states have already passed their own Voting Rights Act, strengthening protections and ensuring their residents can vote without unnecessary obstacles, Rhode Island should join them.

H8334 is a proactive, responsible measure that ensures every Rhode Islander, regardless of language, gender, or background, can participate fully in our democracy. I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend passage of House Bill H8334.

Sincerely,
Cassidy Thatcher