



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

April 16, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley
Chairman, House Committee on State Government & Elections
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2026 H 8334 – An Act Relating to Elections – Rhode Island Voting Rights Act

Dear Chairman Shanley:

I write in strong support of H 8334, legislation establishing the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act to protect every Rhode Island voter's right to fully participate in our democratic process free from discrimination. This Act codifies strong voting rights protections into Rhode Island state law, ensuring that our citizens do not have to rely solely on a diminished federal framework. It prohibits voter suppression and vote dilution by state and local jurisdictions using an effects-based standard, so that voters do not bear the burden of proving discriminatory intent.

The right to vote is the foundation of our government. When that right is undermined, whether through suppression, dilution, or intimidation, our democracy suffers. This Act ensures that Rhode Island has its own strong, state-level protections in place so that every eligible Rhode Islander can exercise their right to vote freely.

This legislation takes meaningful steps to safeguard access to the ballot. The protections outlined in this legislation extend broadly, covering discrimination based on race, color, language minority status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, and country of ancestral origin.

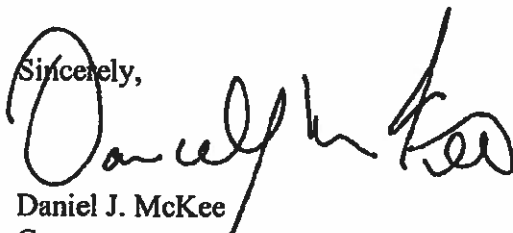
Moreover, the bill creates a private right of action allowing voters, advocacy organizations, and the Attorney General to bring claims in Superior Court, with expedited proceedings and the ability to seek preliminary relief before an election takes place. It also establishes a separate cause of action against voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction, with nominal, compensatory, and punitive damages available to those whose right to vote has been threatened.

The bill also requires language access and disability accommodations wherever census-based demographic thresholds are met, including translated ballots, bilingual poll workers, and live phone interpretation services, ensuring that Rhode Islanders who speak languages other than English or who have disabilities can participate fully in every election.

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Rhode Island has long been a leader in expanding access to the ballot. This legislation builds on that tradition and sends a clear message that we will not allow discrimination to take root in our elections. At a time when voting rights are under attack in Washington, Rhode Island must continue to lead by example and ensure every citizen can make their voice heard.

I commend Secretary of State Gregg Amore for his work in advancing this legislation and House Majority Whip Kazarian for sponsoring H 8334. Protecting the right to vote is a commitment we owe to every citizen of this state. I respectfully urge passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Governments & Elections
The Honorable Katherine S. Kazarian, House Majority Whip
Nicole McCarty, Esq. Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House