



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony in Support of 26-H 8334,
AN ACT RELATING TO ELECTIONS – RHODE ISLAND VOTING RIGHTS ACT
House Committee on State Government & Elections
Hannah Stern - Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
April 16, 2026**

Dear Chair Shanley and honorable members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections:

In my capacity as the Director, Public Policy and Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE), I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony **in support of House Bill 8334**. PPSNE provided sexual and reproductive health care to nearly 10,000 Rhode Island patients last year and believes all people should have access to quality, affordable, and compassionate health care as a basic human right — regardless of who you are, where you live, your income, if you have health insurance or your immigration status.

PPSNE is proud to work with organizations and people in Rhode Island who are engaged in voter education and civic engagement and to participate in the promotion of voting rights as a member of the Rhode Island Voting Access Coalition.

Reproductive freedom cannot be achieved without the fundamental right to vote. The ability to preserve and expand access to reproductive health and rights rests on the right to vote and people to participate in our democracy fully. Voter suppression harms those same populations who are most impacted by anti-reproductive health and rights laws — people of color, young people, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities and people with low-incomes — and voter disenfranchisement directly impedes their ability to fight back against political attempts to control their reproductive health and rights. Without the right to vote, historically oppressed communities lose the right to decide and plan their futures. Voting is how we take control of our bodies, lives, and futures. That is why we support H 8334, which will codify the essential provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act into Rhode Island state law.

Threats to voting rights are real and escalating, and remediation of federal attacks on access to voting is urgent to both preserving democracy and the ability for all people to fight for their reproductive rights. Our responsibility as a state is clear – if we want to ensure that racially discriminatory voting practices remain suppressed; if we want to preserve language access to the ballot; if we want to restrict voter dilution; and if we want to codify a method for all voters to seek accountability for a violation of their voting rights, we can no longer rely on vulnerable federal protections. Rhode Island must demonstrate that our state values the civic engagement and civic contributions of its diverse population by statutorily protecting the rights of voters to stand up for their values at the ballot.

Planned Parenthood will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure our patients and communities have what they need to live healthy and self-determined lives. Having a meaningful right to vote is a critical part in ensuring our elected leaders prioritize efforts to preserve and expand sexual and reproductive health and rights. We urge the committee and legislature to vote in support of H 8334 to codify voting rights in Rhode Island.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Stern', is positioned above the typed name.

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