



April 16, 2026

The Honorable Evan Shanley
Chair, House Committee on State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: In Support of H-8334– Relating to Elections – Rhode Island Voting Rights Act

Dear Chair Shanley and the Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI), **I write in strong support of Senate Bill 3143, the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act.** We applaud Secretary Amore, Majority Whip Kazarian, yourself, and the remaining bill cosponsors for their leadership in advancing this critical legislation to protect and strengthen voting rights in our state.

HNRI's mission is to increase the supply of safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities through coalition-building, policy advocacy, and strategic communications. A core initiative of our work is *Our Homes, Our Votes*, which promotes civic engagement among low- and moderate-income renters, as well as housing-insecure and unhoused Rhode Islanders.

H-8334 builds on federal protections by establishing clear, enforceable standards in state law. It prohibits voter suppression and vote dilution, protects voters from intimidation and discrimination, ensures language access, and creates a private right of action so individuals and organizations can defend voting rights without waiting for government intervention. Importantly, it directs courts to interpret election laws in a pro-voter, pro-democracy manner, ensuring that access to the ballot is always the guiding principle.

For the communities we work with, the protections offered in H-8334 are deeply connected to housing stability and economic opportunity. Housing insecurity is often accompanied by barriers to civic participation. Frequent moves, lack of access to information, and administrative hurdles can all make it harder to register and vote. When people are excluded from the democratic process, their voices are also excluded from decisions that shape housing policy, funding, and development in their communities. Ensuring equitable access to voting through language access and strengthening protection against discriminatory practices is essential to building thriving communities where all eligible voters have a voice in shaping their future.

At a time when new barriers to voting are being proposed at the federal level, such as requirements that could make it harder for eligible voters to register and remain registered, Rhode Island can affirm its commitment to protecting and expanding access to the ballot. While state law cannot override federal law, the *Rhode Island Voting Rights Act* sends a clear and powerful message: our state values inclusive, accessible, and equitable democracy.

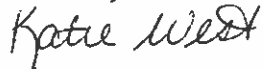
We also wish to highlight and align with the testimony submitted by the Campaign Legal Center

and express our support for the amendments they have proposed. Their recommendations will further strengthen the bill's effectiveness, clarity, and enforceability, and help ensure that the *Rhode Island Voting Rights Act* achieves its full promise of protecting voters and preventing discrimination.

Our democracy works best when every eligible voter can participate. H-8334 is a decisive step toward ensuring that Rhode Island's election system reflects the diversity of our communities and protects the fundamental right to vote for all.

We respectfully urge you to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie West".

Katie West, Director of Strategic Initiatives
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