

Cate Gutowski
Written Testimony in Support of Senate Resolution No. 2132
Regarding the Senate Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2026

Good evening Chairman LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Cate Gutowski and I am a third-year student at Brown University studying English and Political Science. I am also one of the Youth Engagement Committee Chairs of Brown Votes, a nonpartisan student initiative working to expand student civic engagement and voting access both on our campus and for students in the greater Providence area.

Two years ago, in April 2024, I testified in-person before the Senate Judiciary Committee in favor of bill S-2779, a bill that proposed the same changes with the same language as the bill, S-2132, that you are presented with today. This reform has been thoughtfully developed over years in Rhode Island, with Rhode Island voters successfully gaining access to same-day voter registration in the presidential election only in 2024, and I am hopeful that this is the year we translate years of discussion about straightforward same-day voter registration for all Rhode Island elections into its enactment into law.

Over the last three years as part of the Youth Engagement Committee of Brown Votes, I have helped organize voter registration drives at local public and charter high schools throughout Providence, as well as at Brown. I have helped dozens of Rhode Island students over the age of 16 fill out a voter registration or pre-registration form for the first time, and I have seen firsthand how confusing and opaque the voter registration process can be for first-time voters. Many young people are engaged in their communities and eager to participate, but they often do not begin thinking about the process of voting until an election draws near. Same-day voter registration is a practical and commonsense reform that would make it easier for young people and new voters eligible to vote in Rhode Island to do so.

On Election Day in Rhode Island in 2024, I also volunteered at the polls with Common Cause Rhode Island and got to see newly eligible, out-of-state college students register and vote the same day in the presidential election, participating in the democratic process for their first time in the state of Rhode Island. Rhode Island is home to almost a dozen colleges and universities, and same-day voter registration would help ensure thousands of students living in Rhode Island are not excluded from the local and statewide electoral process.

I am originally from Connecticut, where same-day voter registration has been in place for the last 14 years, since 2012. In 2022, I volunteered at a polling location in my town where people could register and vote on one process. Many new, young voters in my area have used this process to vote for the first time by registering on election day. Twenty other states and D.C. provide this same degree of voting access.

Instituting same-day voter registration in Rhode Island would make the process of voting for the first time easier, simpler, less time-consuming, and less intimidating. That can make all the difference for students like me in choosing to participate in democracy and doing so in the state of Rhode Island. Thank you very much for your time today.