

April 5, 2026

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

RE: In Support of Senate Bill S3143

Dear Chair LaMountain and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Cassidy Thatcher, and I am a policy fellow with the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of the Senate Bill S3143, The Rhode Island Voting Rights Act.

From my personal experience, I have worked in legal settings where I have learned how access to justice often hinges on whether systems are designed to include everyone.

Language access requirements are essential. 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 change, their right to vote becomes inaccessible. This Bill ensures consistent access to translated materials, bilingual poll workers, and real time interpretation.

I am also deeply concerned about proposals like the SAVE Act that 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. This bill ensures Rhode Island has strong state-level protections regardless of what happens federally.

Federal voting protection has 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 Acts, strengthened protections and ensured their residents can vote without unnecessary obstacles. Rhode Island should join them.

This Bill 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 Senate Bill S3143.

Sincerely,

Cassidy Thatcher