

**Denise A. Barge- Written Testimony Supporting: S3143**

To: Chairman Senator Matthew L. LaMountain and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I have three basic tenets which I embrace in my life: everyone should have housing, everyone should have food security, and everyone should have access to healthcare. All of these cannot be distributed among the people without the right and privilege to vote. The Voting Rights Act is one of the most important statutes we have in this country as it protects everyone's right to vote and allows our country to function as a true democracy. Until it is codified into Rhode Island state law, our fundamental civil rights are at risk.

As a Rhode Islander, I am urging you to protect everyone's right to vote in this state by supporting S3143. As an African American whose ancestors died and suffered for this hard fought right of self-determination and independence, I urge you to codify what is our investment of hope in this country. **The RI Voting Rights Act** will build on the federal protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by stopping some of the same voter suppression and suppression tactics that we experienced not so many years ago. We are not going back! We will not be silenced, because it is inconvenient or the qualifications have narrowed (most likely excluding people of color). Additionally, passing this bill improves access for Rhode Islanders to vote by mail or early in-person, making the election process more modern and secure. These measures will help Rhode Islanders in every community to exercise their right to vote.

Now more than ever, we need to encourage not discourage the civil right to vote!

Sincerely,

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