

GENERAL ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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POLICY INSTITUTE

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Testimony in Support of H-7100 – Let RI Vote Act

On behalf of the Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University, we strongly support the passage of the Let RI Vote Act (H-7100).

In 2020, in the midst of the ongoing pandemic, we found ourselves as a state and nation understanding that when it comes to exercising our right to vote, we should prioritize health, safety and equitable access. Today, thanks to the efforts and collaboration of our Legislative sponsors, community organizations, and policymakers, the Let RI Vote Act seeks to codify and improve many of the voting access opportunities and barriers that were identified in the last election.

The Let RI Vote Act will provide access to mail ballots for those who need it without requiring a notary or two witness signatures, thereby removing an unnecessary hurdle for most Rhode Islanders. The Act also calls for the creation of an online form to request mail ballots, which will streamline the request process. Additionally, individuals living in nursing homes will be able to opt-in to a permanent mail ballot list.

The Act would also preserve an early voting option for voters who would like to cast their ballot in person during the 20-day “emergency voting” period before Election Day without the need for an excuse or special circumstance. As we saw in 2020, nearly 29% of voters cast their ballot before Election Day. This allows working adults, families, and individuals with disabilities greater flexibility and access to exercise their right to vote. In fact, in an effort to close the access and language gaps for thousands of Rhode Islanders, this legislation will extend the deadline for requesting braille ballots and will create a multilingual voter information hotline. These two pieces are essential to ensuring that individuals with disabilities and those who speak a language other than English always have access to unbiased and correct voter information.

The passage of this legislation will be a pivotal step towards ensuring that Rhode Island voters have improved access to the ballot box during the upcoming election and the ones to come. The Latino Policy Institute is a proud partner of the Let RI Vote Campaign.

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