Testimony: H8334

SUPPORT for the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act

April 16, 2026

Dear Committee Chair Shanley and Committee Members,

My name is Jocelyn Foye and I am the Executive Director of The Womxn Project, a Providence-based nonprofit that primarily focuses on matters related to bodily freedom and government transparency.

I am writing in **strong support of H8334**, the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act (RI VRA). The purpose of the RI VRA is to protect the voting rights of *all* Rhode Islanders by building on the current protections in the 1965 Federal Voting Rights Act. H8334 updates and expands protections, improves language access, and further prohibits voter suppression and dilution.

Over the past year, we have seen an increase in attacks on voting access at the Federal level. With orders demanding states turn over voter data, attempts to federalize elections, and now the push for Congress to pass the SAVE Act, it is clear that voting access and voting rights are on the line. Because of these threats, it is vital that Rhode Island is proactive and addresses these matters appropriately. By passing the RI VRA, Rhode Islanders will have an added layer of protection against the attacks on voting from our Federal government.

Our organization has taken a specific interest in this bill because we recognize that Rhode Island would not have such strong protections for reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights without the very voters who prioritize these issues in the voting booth. It would be a shame to see Rhode Islanders lose access to the rights that have allowed our state to progress into the equitable and safe place it has become.

The law states that “a political subdivision shall not implement, impose, or enforce a qualification for eligibility to be an elector or another prerequisite to voting based on an individual’s actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.” However, without the protections of the RI VRA, we cannot guarantee that this won’t happen.

Additionally, The Womxn Project has been organizing for voting rights since the beginning of session with an attention on this bill’s momentum. Through a larger coalition, a wide range of us have reached out to Rhode Islanders through small nonprofits and other grassroots methods. As a result, I am pleased to say that the number of postcards representing individual constituents to all of you, your fellow Representatives, and all of the Senators, is still growing. We have logged **2,782** so far. Weekly, we hand them out to you or give them to your clerks to have delivered so you are seeing and hearing directly from your own voters.

To be specific, we have collected the following for each of you here:

- Chairman Shanley: 15
- Rep. Messier: 5
- Rep. Corvese: 6
- Rep. Ajello: 80
- Rep. Baginski: 8
- Rep. McGaw: 6
- Rep. Paplauskas: 5
- Rep. Tanzi: 37
- Rep. Brien: 11
- Rep. Dawson: 19
- Rep. Kazarian: 16
- Rep. Kennedy: 26
- Rep. Knight: 40
- Rep. Newberry: 8
- Rep. Stewart: 19

I sincerely hope that you recognize the urgency of protecting the right to vote and support H8334. Rhode Islanders, especially those in minority communities, need to know that they will be supported and protected by their State. The time to act is now. No one can afford to lose their right to vote.

Finally, The Womxn Project supports the proposed amendments to the RIVRA outlined in the written testimony of the Campaign Legal Center to bring the legislation into alignment with the Federal Voting Rights Act, and to clarify and strengthen the RIVRA.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Jocelyn Foye
Executive Director, The Womxn Project