



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Canvassing Department

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February 26, 2024

The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of House Bill 7447

Dear Chairmen Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

As the Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors of the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 7447. This bill would codify protections for election officials and poll workers against threats to personal safety when completing our official duties.

Our elections officials and poll workers are on the front lines of protecting democracy and are the backbone of successful elections. Nationwide, we have witnessed an exodus of senior election official from the field as threats and pressures continue to rise. In Rhode Island, more than one-third of senior election officials in the state have changed jobs or retired since 2020. In this crucial election year, we must do everything we can to reverse this loss of institutional knowledge and attract new talent to public service.

The city of Newport employs approximately 90 poll workers each election year, many of whom are elderly and work long hours under demanding conditions. These dedicated citizens deserve a safe and secure working environment that is free from threats and harassment and our voters deserve a safe election system without the threat of intimidation. Passage of this law would not only help with efforts to retain valuable election officials and poll workers, but it would send a signal that Rhode Island takes protecting our democracy seriously and that we value those that step up to do the difficult work amid tension and uncertainty.

Thank you in advance for your support of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh Moren
Election Administrator

Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors, J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline, Donato D'Andrea & Mary Moniz