



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Renay Brooks Omisore, Chairperson

Mercedes "Betty" Bernal, Clerk

Rochelle Lee, Commissioner

Feb. 23, 2024

The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

82 Smith St.

Providence, RI 02903

RE: Providence Board of Canvassers Support for H-7447

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Providence Board of Canvassers is in **support** H-7447, which would codify protections for election workers against security threats.

Recent years have seen record numbers of attacks and threats against election officials around the nation. Here in Rhode Island in the City of Cranston, there have been two documented incidents of physical attacks against the Canvassing Authority office in recent years that each resulted in arrests by local law enforcement. In jurisdictions nationally, election officials have had to move their families to hotels or needed law enforcement protection. Many states have since enacted laws to protect the people who are responsible for managing our sacred voting and electoral processes.

Nothing is more important than protecting the very foundation of our democracy – and the hard-working civil servants who ensure democracy functions. Nationally, hundreds of senior election workers have left the field following serious threats to their lives, impossible increases in their workloads, and drastic changes in how the public perceives the work of these civil servants. In Rhode Island, more than one-third of senior election officials in the state have changed jobs or retired since 2020 – a remarkable rate of turnover and loss of institutional knowledge.

Election workers have a right – and a necessity – to feel safe when completing our official duties, afforded the full protections of state law. Those who seek to threaten our democracy should face severe criminal penalties, not only as a deterrent against committing such crimes, **but as a signal to election officials and poll workers that their work and community service is valued and essential to preserving our free society and our system of government.**

Very truly yours,

Michael Narducci
Administrator of Election

BOARD OF CANVASSERS

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