

Kirk McDonough
Chairperson

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections



Quilcia I. Moronta
Member

James E. Donahue
Member

CRANSTON BOARD OF CANVASSERS
869 PARK AVE
CRANSTON, RI 02910-2786

Feb. 23, 2024

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

RE: Cranston Board of Canvassers Support for H-7447

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Cranston Board of Canvassers voted unanimously on Dec. 5, 2023 to conceptually **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. In the City of Cranston alone, 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 other 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,

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar/Director of Elections

Cc: Kirk McDonough, Chair, Cranston Board of Canvassers