



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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March 10, 2025

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

Re: Newport Canvassing Authority Support of H-5300 (Election Worker Protections)

Dear Chairmen Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors of the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 5300. Introduced on behalf of the Secretary of State, this bill has the support of the State Board of Elections, the RI Town & City Clerks Association, and the Newport Canvassing Authority. It 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 officials 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 past election cycle, we saw election officials face tremendous pressure. Beyond just hostility and verbal intimidation, white powder was mailed to the State Board of Elections and election officials experienced “swatting.” We must do everything we can to protect election workers, reverse this loss of institutional knowledge and attract new talent to public service.

The city of Newport employed approximately 100 poll workers last 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 for supporting this bill in the 2024 legislative session and we ask you to continue efforts to pass this important legislation this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh Moren
Election Administrator

Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors J. Clement “Bud” Cicilline, Donato D’Andrea, Mary Moniz, Mary Ann Marin