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RHODE ISLAND
Developmental Disabilities Council
Charting a New Course

March 26, 2024

**RE: H7476 - RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- STATEWIDE REFERENDA
ELECTIONS**

Chairman Shanley and Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections,

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council supports efforts to ensure access to the polls and securing each Rhode Islander's right to vote. Access is more than a physical requirement, such as ensuring people who use wheel chairs can enter a polling location, it is also about understanding who and what is on the ballot.

House Bill 7476 will require ballot questions to be in reasonably plain and understandable language. This will allow for greater understanding and access to many voters in Rhode Island, including those with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

In addition to plain language, all electronic communications and web content must also meet the Americans with Disability Act accessibility standards. The Department of Justice has stated that a website with inaccessible features can limit the ability of people with disabilities to access a public entity's programs, services, and activities available through that website (finding information on ballot questions would be one example). The DOJ has consistently taken the position that the ADA's requirements apply to all the services, programs, or activities of state and local governments, including those offered on the web.

Plain language and compliance with electronic communications standards will allow for access to the voting process and better representation of all the voters.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at any time kevinnerney@riddc.org or (401) 737-1238.

Kevin Nerney
Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council