

## Testimony on H 7756--An Act Relating to Elections--Mail Ballots

### Position: Support

Common Cause Rhode Island supports H 7756 which allows local election officials to process mail ballot applications that are received within three days of the 21-day deadline.

Since 2011 Rhode Island has gradually made it easier for eligible voters to qualify to vote by mail. The result has been a larger percentage of voters choosing to vote by mail. With that a new problem has arisen; otherwise-eligible mail ballot applications that arrive past the 21-day mail ballot application deadline.

Under current law, local boards of canvassers must reject mail ballot applications that arrive after the 21-day deadline, even if they would have no problem providing the voter with a mail ballot with sufficient time for them to return that ballot to be counted. Many local boards instead send the voter a second application, for an emergency mail ballot, that results in the voter voting in virtually the same manner.

This legislation makes a reasonable accommodation by allowing local boards to accept mail ballot applications if they arrive by mail within three days of the 21-day deadline.

The presence of an online mail ballot application form, which will be used in a general election for the first time in 2024, should mitigate the problem this bill seeks to address. Nonetheless, it's important to continue to improve our elections system in Rhode Island.

We urge the committee to support H 7756.