

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

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Cranston Board of Canvassers Support for H-7756 (3-Day Mail Ballot Application Transmittal)

Dear Chairman Shanley and Hon. Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Cranston Board of Canvassers to request the support of the House for **H-7756**, an act that would allow a three-day transmittal period for mail ballot applications received via USPS mail after the 21-day deadline. This bill is supported by a **unanimous** vote of both the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association and the Rhode Island Board of Elections, and by the Secretary of State, among other organizations. **I will note that both legislative chambers overwhelmingly voted in support of a similar bill in 2023.**

Because local boards of canvassers have to reject hundreds of late applications, voters are being **wrongfully disenfranchised**. The remedy is demonstrably nonsensical: upon rejection for being received past the deadline – which is a cumbersome and labor-intensive process for local boards to process – the local board must mail a rejection letter, which includes an “emergency” application with it for the voter to complete and return, with limited time remaining. However, this emergency application contains nearly identical language as the “late” mail ballot application, which is already in possession of the local board and could have been processed. Each election cycle, hundreds of mail ballot applications are placed in the mail by voters in the days ahead of the deadline, but due to mail delivery cycles, most are received late, in the three days following the deadline.

Local boards of canvassers should be permitted to accept and process these applications, because there is still more than two weeks for the Secretary of State to mail the voter the ballot they requested, which is ample time for the voter to receive and return it. The 21-day deadline established by law does make sense – but there absolutely should be a window where applications should be accepted. A similar window, of five days, **already exists in state law** for the transmittal and receipt of voter registration forms past the 30-day deadline. Election officials should not have to reject mail ballot applications on such a trivial – and operationally unnecessary – technicality.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. If you have any questions on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 401-780-3128, or via email at nlima@cranstonri.gov.

Very truly yours,

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections

Cc: Kirk McDonough, Chairperson, Cranston Board of Canvassers