



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

Re: Support of House Bill 7756

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

As Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors and the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to strongly encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 7756, which was introduced on behalf of the State Board of Elections and has unanimous support from the RI Town & City Clerks Association. This bill would clarify the process for voters needing to sign with an "X" when unable to provide their full signature and would allow for a 3-day transmittal period of mail ballot applications after the deadline. We also support similar legislation in the Senate, S-2101.

Under current legislation, voters are permitted to substitute their signature with an "X" on their mail ballot application in the event of physical incapacitation or any other reason. This bill would clarify the reasons for such a need, now made under the penalty of perjury, and include the optional information of anyone assisting the voter with their application or mail ballot. This helps with transparency of the process and to help prevent any issues associated with a person assisting a voter by including their information.

More importantly, this bill also resolves a problem that happens when voters use the postal service to submit their application for a mail ballot around the deadline. Many mistakenly believe that if the application is postmarked before the deadline, then we will accept it. Current law requires local boards of canvassers to reject any late applications to vote by mail. When this happens, we must offer the voter an "emergency" mail ballot application. This second application is valid for the period 20 days before the election and is virtually identical to the regular mail ballot application the voter already filled out - it just now says "emergency". Voters are understandably frustrated to receive nearly identical paperwork and many do not

bother to reapply when faced with another bureaucratic hurdle. Additionally, this conflicts with the process to register to vote where a 5-day transmittal period is allowed by law and postmarks are honored.

Passage of House Bill 7756 would save local boards of canvassers the time rejecting late applications and the expense of mailing out new emergency applications and would ultimately improve the election process for voters who are trying to vote by mail. With a 3-day transmittal period, there is still more than two weeks for the Secretary of State's office to mail out ballots, providing ample time for voters to receive and return their ballots.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline
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