

Lily Luby
Regarding House of Representatives Judiciary Committee
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Good Evening, Chairman Craven and members of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. My name is Lily Luby and I am a first-year student at Brown University studying International and Public Affairs as well as a member of the organization Brown Votes. I am here to testify against House Bill 5383, which would alter the language regarding local voter registration drives at high schools from "shall" to "may," in reference to the duty of local boards to implement these drives.

While I am a student at Brown University, I hail from Glastonbury, Connecticut, where I was first introduced to civil liberties and civic engagement at my public high school. In particular, my American history and civics teacher was a staunch proponent of getting students registered as early as possible so that they faced as few obstacles as possible in expressing their right to a political opinion. I took Mr. Anderson's advice and registered at 17 years old, after which I placed a mail-in ballot from Brown University.

Unfortunately, Connecticut has no mandatory high school voter registration drives. I feel thankful that I had the resources and support system in place to help me register and carry out my own voting, including my outstanding teacher and my own mother, who provided additional information that I needed while filling out my ballot. However, I recognize that realistically, many other high school students in Connecticut do not have these same resources. For them, a voter registration drive at their local high school may be their only opportunity to register to vote, if they have no way of accessing a registration center or have trouble accessing information on how to register.

I know that had I had the opportunity of a voter registration drive in high school, I not only would have been registered earlier, but many of my friends would have registered as well, and would not have faced challenges like many of them did in registering out-of-state at their new universities. High school voter registration drives encourage youth participation in their government system, a metric on which Rhode Island should pride itself. Rather than cutting back on requirements to hold these vital events, Rhode Island should celebrate them as a way of protecting and encouraging youth voices in civics.

At perhaps the most divisive time in the history of American politics, the youth voice is critical to shape our nation for generations to come. As the founding fathers intended, civic participation is our citizens' fundamental right, and thus must be protected and encouraged, accounting for those who may not have the ability to register independently, among the youth at mandatory high school voter registration drives. Thank you for your time and consideration.