



Testimony Re: HR 5515 - THE ELECTORS A PROPOSITION OF AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

House Committee on State Government & Elections

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports House Resolution 5515. We thank Representatives Alzate for sponsoring this bill and Representatives Hull, Ajello, Cortvriend, Fogarty, Edwards, Batista, Morales, Tanzi, and Carson for co-sponsoring. This resolution would place a question on the ballot to amend Rhode Island's Constitution to allow for Same Day Voter Registration.

Rhode Island is one of the few states that still require voters to register 30 days before an election in our state constitution. This deadline disproportionately impacts renters, young families, low-income residents, and newly naturalized citizens who may not realize they need to update their voter registration until it's too late.

Research shows that families with young children, especially those in low-income households, experience high residential instability due to housing challenges or relationship changes. A major national study, the *Fragile Families Study*, found that two-thirds of mothers moved at least once within their child's first three years of life, and 45% moved in the first year alone. Rhode Island's outdated voter registration system makes it harder for these families to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

By eliminating this deadline, Same Day Voter Registration (SDR) will:

- Allow all eligible voters to register and vote up to and on Election Day.
- Increase overall voter turnout.
- Reduce racial inequities in voter participation—Black and Latino voters, who are nearly twice as likely to rent as white voters.
- Improve voter list accuracy by allowing real-time registration updates.
- Reduce the need for provisional ballots, streamlining election administration.

The ability to vote is directly linked to the policies that shape the lives of Rhode Island's children, from access to high-quality early learning programs to investments in affordable housing and economic opportunity. We need more parents, early educators, and low-income workers to be engaged in elections so their voices can influence decisions that affect their families.

SDR is already available in four of six New England states which include Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. Amending the state constitution and laws to allow for same day voter registration will bring Rhode Island in line with 22 states across the U.S.

By allowing Same Day Voter Registration, we ensure that more Rhode Islanders,

especially those who are most impacted by our state's policies—can fully participate in our democracy. Rhode Island should not continue to let an outdated rule block eligible voters from having their say.

We urge the committee to support this legislation and give Rhode Islanders the opportunity to decide on a constitutional amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.