



**Testimony in Support of HB 8334 – Rhode Island Voting Rights Act  
House Committee on State Government and Elections  
April 16, 2026**

**Hector Perez-Aponte, Racial Justice Policy Analyst, the Economic Progress Institute**

The Economic Progress Institute **supports Representative Kazarian’s HB 8334**, which would create the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act to establish procedures to prevent discrimination in the voting process.

Rhode Islanders deserve to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote without unnecessary hindrances or obstacles. However, the weakening of the federal Voting Rights Act (via Supreme Court decisions) has significantly reduced key protections that once prevented discriminatory voting practices, particularly in states with histories of voter suppression. By limiting federal oversight—such as preclearance requirements—U.S. Supreme Court rulings have made it easier for restrictive voting laws to be enacted without prior review, raising concerns about unequal access to the ballot. Accordingly, state action has become increasingly important to safeguard voting rights, ensure fair access, prevent discrimination, and maintain public confidence in democratic participation.

We also encourage **strengthening the bill through targeted amendments to expand protections for language access and translation services**, ensuring that voters with limited English proficiency can participate fully in the democratic process. Additionally, the bill should include **stronger safeguards for voters whose names may have changed**—such as due to marriage, divorce, or gender transition—to prevent unnecessary barriers or challenges to their eligibility at the polls.

HB 8334 would protect Rhode Islanders’ constitutional right to vote. In too many jurisdictions across the country, elected officials have tried to restrict voting and select their own voters. If elected officials truly seek to represent Rhode Islanders, they should ensure elections are fair—and they should aspire to be elected by as many voters as possible. We urge passage.