



**Testimony in Favor of A5176
Assembly State and Local Government Committee
May 11, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Verelli and Vice Chair Swain. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey (LWVNJ). My name is Philip Hensley and I am the Democracy Policy Analyst with LWVNJ. We are here to testify in support of Assembly Bill 5176.

This bill would bring consistency and transparency to elections reporting in New Jersey. By providing regular reporting of counted and outstanding ballots by ballot type, this legislation would provide increased certainty about the timeline for determining election outcomes, and more importantly, it would increase public confidence in our elections.

Election misinformation is a significant issue, and no one policy can address it in its entirety. However, this bill would help address this problem in two significant ways. First, this bill would help address the “information gap” around elections. When voter interest in an election is high, but the supply of reliable information is limited, an information gap results, and misinformation and disinformation flourish. This bill would help address this issue by ensuring the availability of timely and accurate election information throughout the vote counting process.

Second, this bill would help educate the public regarding the variability of election results. As we have seen in recent elections, reporting of early election results can be misleading if not appropriately contextualized with information about the nature of the ballots that have been counted and those that remain to be counted, including information about ballot type. In the absence of this detailed information, unofficial results reporting may not only mislead voters, but can also provide opportunities for false narratives to take hold.

However, we do have a concern relating to a new provision added to this bill since it was last heard in this committee, relating to provisional ballots. Today's amendments remove the requirement to provide unofficial totals of provisional ballots. Full transparency requires that this relatively small number of ballots should also be included.

Although transparency measures by themselves will not be able to dispel all potential election misinformation and disinformation, they provide an essential tool in helping to maintain confidence in our elections. For these reasons, we urge you to vote yes on Assembly Bill 5176. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony presented by:

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