

*“Let Rhode Island Vote” Media Briefing
March 10, 2021*

Remarks of Miranda Oakley, South Kingston

Imagine it's Election Day. You cannot take yourself to your polling or drop box location or drive yourself to meet with a notary or the two people you need to be your witnesses in order to vote. The notary and two witnesses cannot come meet you because of hectic work schedules. Without these two witnesses and a notary, you cannot vote. This could become reality for me as a totally blind woman unless the two-witness and notary requirement is removed. In my town there is no accessible transportation like the RIde program because I don't live on a bus route, and Ubers are unreliable where I live. Removing the notary and two-witness requirement would mean myself and other voters with disabilities throughout Rhode Island would be able to vote without worrying about missing out on their constitutional right because they couldn't get witnesses or find a notary.

Because of Covid-19, mailing in my ballot has worked well for me. Because of personal preference, I have not used a Braille ballot. Mailing in my ballot allows me to exercise my constitutional right to vote without putting myself or my household at risk. I believe people should have the freedom to cast their vote in whatever method works best for them. It's my belief that voters should be able to mail in their ballot even without a pandemic if they choose to do so. Mailing in my ballot means I can cast my vote without worrying about how I'm going to get to my polling or drop box location. Mail in ballots are also great for those of us struggling with transportation. Our voting rights should not be taken away from us because of unnecessary barriers holding us back. Every vote matters, including voters with disabilities.