

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

March 2, 2012

Statement of Michael J. Brandi, Executive Director & General Counsel

House Joint Resolution No. 2 & House Bill No. 5022

Good morning, Chairperson Slossberg, Chairman Morin, Ranking Members Senator McLachlan and Representative Hwang, and distinguished Committee members. I am Michael Brandi, the Executive Director & General Counsel of the State Elections Enforcement Commission.

#1 H.J. No. 2 RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO GRANT AUTHORITY TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.

As it has in the past, the Commission supports the concept of removing the conditions for absentee voting from the Constitution and leaving such details to the General Assembly to determine by statute. We look forward to being part of the state's ongoing efforts to make voting both accessible and secure.

#3 H.B. No. 5022 AN ACT INCREASING PENALTIES FOR VOTER INTIMIDATION AND INTERFERENCE.

The Commission supports HB 5022. Fraud and intimidation against a voter can have real and severe impact on that individual's right to unencumbered participation in this crucial event in a participatory democracy: casting one's ballot. Moreover, while crimes of this nature occur very rarely, when they do, they directly and dramatically impact the public's perception of the electoral process. The Governor's bill, increasing the penalties to Class D and, in some cases, Class C felonies, is a welcome step and a warning message to those who would seek to bully and/or mislead any voter into losing their vote.