Opposition to Section 27 Line 14 of House Bill 5498

My name is John Gomes and I am a former mayoral candidate in Bridgeport. I am opposed to the removal of the word "independent" in Section 27, line 14 of HB 5498 from a minor party designation. I was fortunate to receive the endorsement of the Independent Party in the recent Bridgeport election.

The fact that this language stripping the Independent Party of their name appears just several weeks following the court ordered primary and general election in Bridgeport is not coincidental in my opinion. Given the decades of existence of the Independent Party, I find it hard to believe that there is a sudden outcry from unaffiliated voters who wish to vote in party primaries are punished because they made a mistake in the registration form. I think it's important to know who inserted this language into an election integrity bill. If there is a legitimate issue, the solution lies in updating the voter registration forms. Punishing a minor party for supporting a candidate who was not endorsed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, two U.S. Senators, and the 4th Congressional Congressman at the urging of the Bridgeport DTC Chair is petty, undemocratic, and unconstitutional.

Two members of the Board of Education and three City Sheriffs were elected on the Independent Party line in the November 2023 election in Bridgeport. These elected officials in Bridgeport as well as all current elected Independents throughout the state should not be punished and disenfranchised for their preferred choice of candidate.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Gomes
Former Bridgeport Mayoral Candidate