

Statement for Self-Represented Litigants to Read in Court:

As a self-represented litigant, I learned that before a hearing begins, it is critical for self-represented litigants (SRLs) to speak on the record to protect their rights to due process and equal protection under the law.

In Rhode Island, this is especially important because judges are not required to provide these protections unless you specifically request them. Through trial and error, I discovered that making a statement at the very start of the hearing is essential to ensure your rights are recognized.

Recommended Statement to Read Aloud

“Before we proceed, I respectfully request that the record reflect that I am appearing today without legal representation, while the opposing party is represented by counsel”.

I assert my rights under the **Due Process** and **Equal Protection Clauses** of the **Fourteenth** and **Fifth Amendments**, and I rely on the following **U.S. Supreme Court precedents**:

- *Haines v. Kerner*, **404 U.S. 519 (1972)**
- *Turner v. Rogers*, **564 U.S. 431 (2011)**
- *Mathews v. Eldridge*, **424 U.S. 319 (1976)**

These decisions establish **how self-represented litigants should be treated** and define the **legal standards** for protecting **due process rights**.”

Why This Statement Matters

- Ensures your status as a self-represented litigant is officially recorded.
 - Invokes your constitutional rights under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.
 - References important U.S. Supreme Court cases that support your position.
 - Protects you from being denied fair treatment during the hearing.
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Important Tips

- Say this before the hearing begins and before any legal issues are discussed.
- Speak clearly so the court reporter records your statement accurately.
- You don't need to shout—just make sure you are heard and it's on the record.

Final Note

As a self-represented litigant, you must ask for your rights. In Rhode Island, the court may not automatically provide these protections. Making this statement ensures your rights are preserved from the very start.