



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 88
Belfast, ME 04915
Phone: (207) 761-5616
www.sierraclub.org/maine

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
From: Jacob Stern
Date: March 21, 2023
Re: **Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 1055: *An Act to Prohibit the Use of Ballot Drop Boxes***

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the members of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I am testifying today on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. As such, we believe that a thriving democracy and strong voter participation laws are intrinsically linked to our state and our nation's ability to combat climate change, reduce pollution, and address other environmental harms.

Historically, communities of color have been disproportionately exposed to pollution from industrial manufacturing sites, landfills, and power plants.¹ As a result, these communities face higher rates of asthma, cancer, and premature death. It's no coincidence that these same communities have been disproportionately targeted, around the country, with policies aimed at restricting their ability to engage in our elections. Making it harder for individuals to cast a ballot will mean their communities have less say in who represents them at the local, state, and federal level, effectively silencing their voice. Sierra Club supports policies to expand voting opportunities to eligible voters, not erect additional barriers.

L.D. 1055: *An Act to Prohibit the Use of Ballot Drop Boxes* would prohibit the use of ballot drop boxes in all municipalities, adding additional unnecessary barriers for voters who seek to cast their ballot. In fact, recent studies show that conveniently placed ballot drop boxes serve to modestly *increase* voter turnout.² Additionally, since Maine law requires that

¹ "Study Finds Exposure to Air Pollution Higher for People of Color Regardless of Region or Income." Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 20 Sep. 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/study-finds-exposure-air-pollution-higher-people-color-regardless-region-or-income>.

² McGuire, William; Gonzalez, Benjamin; Baird, Katherine; Corbett, Benjamin; Collingwood, Loren. "Does Distance Matter? Evaluating the Impact of Drop Boxes on Voter Turnout." *Social Science Quarterly*, 24 Aug 2020, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/ssqu.12853>.

ballots be *received* by 8:00 P.M. on Election Day, drop boxes are particularly helpful for voters seeking to return an absentee ballot on or shortly before the polls close, when a mail delivery will not arrive on time to be counted. Maine boasts one of the highest voter participation rates in the country. In the 2022 elections, of any state in the nation, only Minnesota voters cast ballots at a higher rate than Mainers did.³ Our elections remain secure, free from interference. In the last two federal elections, Secretary of State Shenna reported zero incidents of voter fraud or ballot box tampering.

This legislation is either an unnecessary and misguided effort to increase election security or a blatant attempt to restrict voter participation for political ends. Whatever the reason, neither passes muster. We strongly urge an “ought not to pass” report on L.D. 1055: *An Act to Prohibit the Use of Ballot Drop Boxes*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jacob Stern

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Vice Chair, Executive Committee
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

³ Meyers, David. “Which states had the highest turnout in 2022?.” Fulcrum, 14 Nov. 2022, <https://thefulcrum.us/voter-turnout-by-state-2022>.