



March 10, 2025

The Honorable Kelly Murphy, Chair  
Maine Legislature House Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs  
Cross Building, Room 208  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Support for LD 734, An Act to Promote Voter Registration for Students in Maine High Schools (McCabe)

Dear Representative Murphy and Members of the House Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

The Civics Center is pleased to support LD 734, An Act to Promote Voter Registration for Students in Maine High Schools (McCabe), which requires secondary schools to organize and facilitate voter registration and education activities, including voter registration drives.

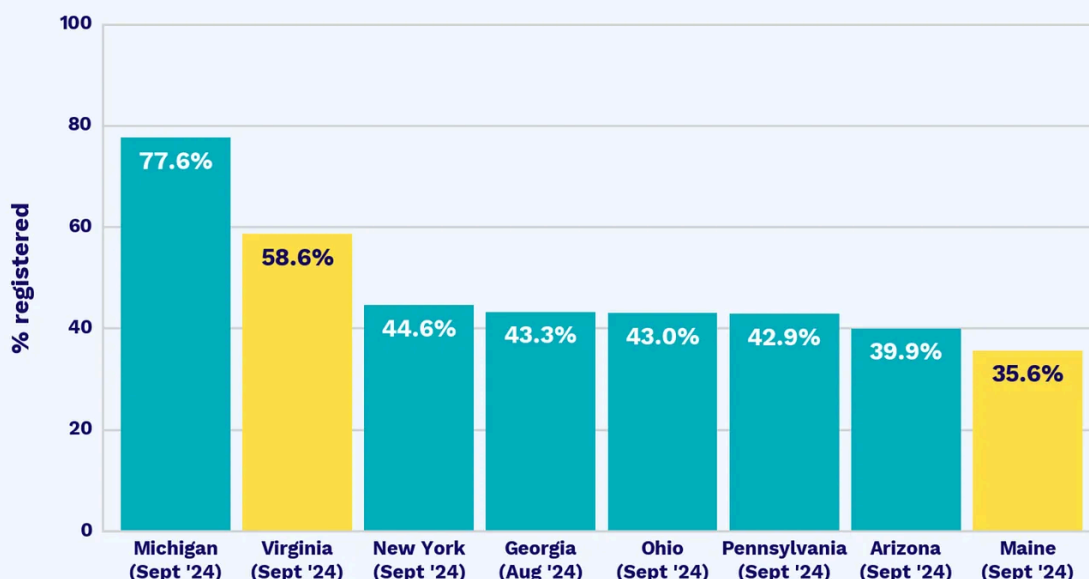
Maine is one of 19 states that allows young people to preregister to vote by the time they turn 16. More than half of US teens live in such states.

Preregistration is nonpartisan, and states supporting it have ranged across the political spectrum. Laws allowing preregistration exist in states that are solidly “blue,” like California and NY, states that are solidly “red,” like Utah and Louisiana, and states in the middle, like Maine, North Carolina, and Virginia. Regardless of party affiliation of young voters, or a decision to remain independent, preregistration creates a necessary onramp to democracy for young people.

Until now, however, Maine’s preregistration law has not been effectively implemented among all secondary schools in the state. The Civics Center studies voter registration and preregistration rates for the youngest voters and potential voters across the country. Heading into the 2024 election, Maine had one of the lowest registration rates for 18-year-olds of any state for which we have data. This result is illustrated in the chart below.

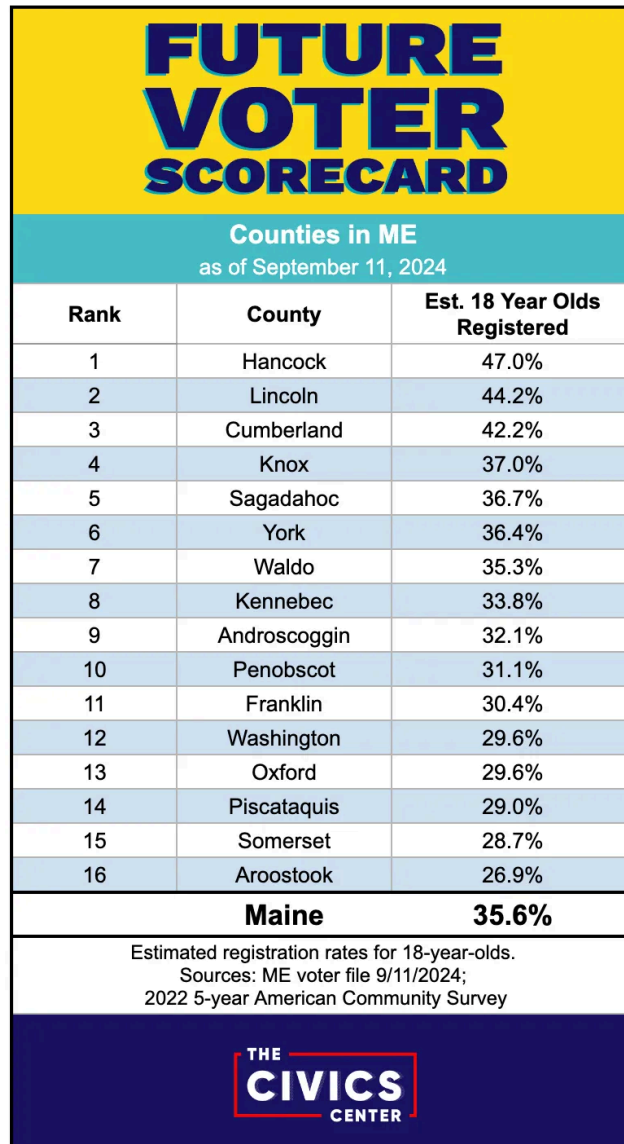
## State Comparison of 18-year-old Voter Registration Rates

Between Aug. and Sept. 2024



Source: US Census, voter files from Arizona, Georgia, Maine, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia

Maine also has wide variations in registration rates among counties, with 18-year-olds in Hancock County registered at 47% versus only 27% of their peers in Aroostook County. For context, adults aged 45+ are registered at rates above 75%. The table below provides our estimates of the voter registration rates for 18-year-olds in Maine by county as of September 11, 2024. The results are derived from the most reliable information available, the Maine voter file and the American Community Survey, published by the Census bureau.



Research shows that 18- to 29-year-old nonvoters commonly cite “not being registered” as their reason for not voting. See, e.g., The Center For Information & Research On Civic Learning And Engagement, Knowledge About Voter Laws Still Lacking (2012). And nationwide only six to seven percent said they had been asked to register at school or as part of a class. See The Pew Charitable Trust, Why Are Millions of Citizens Not Registered To Vote? (2017).



In addition, current systems often simply do not reach young voters.

- [46% of Maine high school seniors do not go on to college](#), so voter registration programs on college campuses do not reach them.
- Roughly 35% of Maine 18-year-olds do not have driver's licenses, based on data from the [Census](#) and the [Federal Highway Administration](#). Voter registration at the state Motor Vehicles Bureau does not reach them.

Tens of thousands of newly eligible young voters are not being reached, but virtually all of them go to high school..

We have seen high schools across the country embrace nonpartisan voter registration drives in which students can take a leadership role in encouraging their peers to register. In 2024, The Civics Center sparked and supported voter registration drives in more than 300 high schools across 35 states. In addition to helping more students register to vote, drives create an opportunity to build civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, encouraging teens to consider the power they have to shape their communities. All of these elements strengthen democracy by creating more informed and active citizens.

The Civics Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a mission to make voter registration part of every high school in America. The Civics Center is a project of Community Partners, a 501(c)(3) organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura W. Brill  
Founder & CEO

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The Civics Center  
LD 734

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