



TO: The Honorable Joseph Rafferty
The Honorable Kelly Murphy
Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

DATE: March 11, 2025

RE: LD 734 - An Act to Promote Voter Registration for Students in Maine's High Schools

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Al Cleveland. I am here today as the Advocacy Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in favor of LD 734.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government. Each year our volunteers coordinate dozens of voter registration events across the state, many of which are hosted by high schools.

This bill gives high school teachers and administrators support and standing for engaging in the nonpartisan activity of registering eligible students to vote. Over the past five years, we have been troubled to see a cultural shift in schools where teachers and administrators are more and more hesitant to host these types of events. But this is not politics; it's citizenship. This reluctance means young Mainers are losing opportunities to learn about their civic duties and engage as active citizens.

This bill will also help equalize voter registration across Maine. Currently, rural counties are registering students at half the rate of their more urban counterparts¹. In a recent study, Maine 18-year-olds were registering at the lowest rate in comparison to states with the same voter registration laws. In fact, only 35.6% of 18-year-olds were registered as of September 2024².

We also know that nationally, despite young people's care and commitment to their communities, only 6% of students are asked to register while they are in high school³. Twenty-nine states across the country have legislation that supports voter registration in schools⁴.

We urge you to pass this bill and help equalize the availability of voter registration drives to all young Mainers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

¹ <https://www.thecivicscenter.org/blog/virgina-and-maine-young-voter-registration-rates>

² <https://www.thecivicscenter.org/blog/virgina-and-maine-young-voter-registration-rates>

³ <https://www.thecivicscenter.org/why-high-school>

⁴ <https://circle.tufts.edu/explore-our-data/youth-voting-and-civic-engagement-america/state-statutes>