Anne M. Gallaudet
Scarborough, Maine

April 24, 2025

Re: <u>LD 1666</u>, An Act to Include in the Ranked-choice Election Method for General and Special Elections the Offices of Governor, State Senator and State Representative and to Make Other Related Changes

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

I appreciate this opportunity to address you on this important matter. My name is Anne Gallaudet. I am a resident of Scarborough, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1666.

I strongly support using rank choice voting (RCV) for general and special elections for the Offices of Governor, State Senator and State Representative. I am excited about the prospect of RCV being expanded to include gubernatorial and state legislature elections before the November 2026 election.

What I like about RCV over traditional voting? RCV lets the voter (me!) rank candidates in order of my preference – first choice, second choice, and so on. One can vote for their first choice but also indicate a second and third choice candidate. If my first choice does not win, I know my vote automatically counts for my next choice. This eliminates the need for run-off elections. It also means that I do not have to worry about spoilers in races of three or more. Thus, I can choose as my first choice someone I prefer rather than make a strategic choice.

Honestly, I also like RCV because I believe winners elected under RCV have the support of the majority. To survive RCV they need to appeal to a wide swath of peoples' interests. We will experience a richer and more in-depth discussion of issues. Successful candidates must persuade people to choose them as their number one choice, and if not that, make them their number two or number three choice. And in doing so, if elected, the candidate will have a larger mandate to govern. I am a proud progressive, *and* I like the idea of ensuring a more representative government. I do not want a process that leads to the extremes of a party being elected unless that is what most people want. Moreover, I like that RCV leads to more positive campaign process as each candidate tries to appeal to as many voters as they can, including those whose first choice is not them. Being the second choice is better than being the last choice.

Additionally, especially in today's fiscal climate, running a RCV election process is less costly and time consuming than a traditional election that could lead to a run-off. A RCV election will also likely draw a higher turnout and be efficient.

Now some people see RCV as a partisan issue and in Maine may see it as favoring Democrats. It is not partisan. Many conservatives support RCV, including the Cato

Institute See https://www.rankedvote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/conservative-case-for-rcv; https://www.cato.org/commentary/why-conservatives-shouldnt-fear-ranked-choice-voting; https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/conservatives-should-look-more-closely-at-systemic-election-reforms/

More so, I note that when a rank choice vote initiative - Initiative 83 - was put before the voters in Washington, DC in November 2024, the Democratic Party, the majority party in DC, was solidly against it because they feared it would dilute their power. Indeed, the DC Democratic Party initially sued to stop the Initiative in 2023. Nonetheless, the Initiative was presented to the voters in November 2024 and passed with support of over 72% of the voters.
https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,_D.C.,_Initiative_83,_Ranked-Choice_Voting_Initiative_(November_2024)

Further, RCV gives voters the possibility of electing candidates outside the two major parties and creates the circumstances for a more lively and nuanced discussion of issues of interest to voters.

Lastly, I note that most Maine voters like RCV and have successfully voted in RCV elections. Participation since the adoption of RCV has not led to decreased participation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1666.

Anne Gallaudet,
Scarborough, ME