

DISABILITY RIGHTS MAINE

May 2, 2025

Senator Hickman, Chair
Representative Supica, Chair
Joint Standing Committee Veterans and Legal Affairs
State House, Room 437
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: LD 38, *An Act Requiring Photographic Identification for Voting*
LD 397, *An Act to Require a Voter to Show Photographic Identification*
LD 1149, *An Act to Require an Individual to Present Photographic Identification
for the Purpose of Voting*

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Molly Thompson and I am an Advocate at Disability Rights Maine (DRM), Maine's designated Protection and Advocacy agency for people with disabilities. I work in the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) Program, which was created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002. The program is tasked with ensuring that people with disabilities have full participation in the election process. On behalf of DRM and the individuals we serve, I offer testimony against LDs 38, 397, and 1149.

If enacted, LD 1149 will disenfranchise Maine voters with disabilities. People with disabilities comprise a significant portion of Maine's electorate. Individuals with disabilities in Maine largely rely on varying forms of absentee voting to successfully cast their ballots.

Ending ongoing absentee ballot status a mere year after the program's implementation will cause confusion for voters currently using the service. Eliminating the ability to request an absentee ballot by phone or through a family member will present immense difficulties to individuals with disabilities who do not live independently or who lack accessible transportation. Removing prepaid postage from absentee ballot return envelopes—requiring individuals to obtain a stamp—may seem like an innocuous task to many, but for countless Mainers with disabilities, it could be the one step that prevents them from casting their ballot. DRM has observed firsthand

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

that for individuals who live in congregate settings, creating additional steps to the voting process often prompts them to choose not to vote because they view the process as too cumbersome. For someone needing transportation, funds, or assistance to procure something as simple as one stamp, this process could be the reason—whether disabled and or not—they decide not to vote.

Lastly, DRM opposes all efforts to require photo identification in the voting process as proposed in LD 1149, LD 397, and LD 38. In *Doe vs. Rowe*, 156 F. Supp. 2d 35 (D. Me. 2001), the Maine Law Court ruled that even individuals under guardianship retain their right to vote. Despite this ruling, Disability Rights Maine remains concerned that guardians may nevertheless prevent individuals from obtaining state identification cards, thereby barring their access to the electoral process. While LD 1149 would provide state identification cards at no cost, it does not account for the time and logistical burden—a burden that will disproportionately affect rural voters. No permanent Bureau of Motor Vehicle (BMV) office exists in five of Maine’s sixteen counties (Franklin, Lincoln, Piscataquis, Somerset, and Waldo). An individual living in Millinocket, for example, would have to drive one hour and ten minutes to the nearest BMV in Bangor. At minimum, the transaction would require roughly 3 hours and 140-miles round trip.

DRM urges you to vote ought not to pass on legislation that will erect further barriers to voting for Mainers with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Molly Thompson".

Molly Thompson /s/
Advocate