

# DISABILITY RIGHTS MAINE

February 6, 2023

Senator Craig Hickman  
Representative Laura Supica  
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs  
State House, Room 437  
Augusta, ME 04330

Re: LD 34, *An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting*

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Honorable Members of the Committee;

On behalf of Disability Rights Maine (DRM), thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit testimony regarding LD 34, *An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting*. My name is Sara Squires and I am the Public Policy Director at Disability Rights Maine (DRM), the state's designated federal Protection and Advocacy agency for Mainers with Disabilities. One of DRM's programs is the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA), which works to ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities. This proposed legislation offers a remedy that is in search of a problem. Rather than address an actual, existing issue, LD 34 would only serve to *exacerbate* a well-documented failure of our electoral process: the disenfranchisement of voters with disabilities.

This bill addresses the direct cost of obtaining a photographic identification, previously equated to a poll tax, by adding a fiscal note that transfers this cost to the State, thereby making ID cards "free" for voters. This is misleading. This fails to consider the indirect costs associated with acquiring a State ID or a proposed "free" photographic Voter ID. Obtaining certified birth certificates, copies of court orders, medical records or any of the acceptable supporting documents can prove costly. Many individuals with disabilities are relegated to a life of poverty, relying on a fixed income that barely covers their basic living expenses, let alone the cost of obtaining documents required to obtain a photographic ID. This burden is magnified for

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

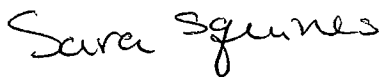
individuals residing in nursing homes, assisted living facilities or any number of care facilities and whose income is diverted to cover their cost of care.

In *Doe vs. Rowe*, 156 F. Supp. 2d 35 (D. Me. 2001), the Maine Law Court ruled that even if an individual is under guardianship, they still retain their right to vote. Despite this ruling, Disability Rights Maine is concerned that guardians might nevertheless prevent their wards from obtaining state identification cards, thereby barring their access to the electoral process. Similarly, if an individual has a payee who manages their Social Security benefits, the payee has the ability to refuse authorization of funds necessary for obtaining supporting documents. These individuals, especially eligible voters with disabilities in Maine who are dependent on friends, family or paid support staff for transportation and/or financial and other decision-making, would be unable to acquire an ID and therefore barred from participating in the voting process.

Finally, thousands of Maine people with disabilities do not have their driver's license and, where the lack of a public transportation system is well acknowledged, physically accessing a Motor Vehicle Office will prove difficult. Currently, no permanent offices exist within five of Maine's sixteen counties (Franklin, Lincoln, Piscataquis, Somerset, and Waldo). While the Secretary of State's Office has established mobile locations that serve more remote areas of the state, none of these offices are presently open and accessible by the public. Further, obtaining a State ID is not a covered service under MaineCare's Non-Emergency Transportation Program, forcing individuals to rely on friends, family, or costly taxi services to transport them to a Motor Vehicle Office. For individuals who already lack reliable transportation, even accessing a Bureau of Motor Vehicle Office can pose logistical – and financial – challenges.

It is for the foregoing reasons that Disability Rights Maine urges you to vote against legislation that will erect further barriers to voting by Maine individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,



Sara Squires  
Public Policy Director