



TO: The Honorable Tim Nangle  
The Honorable Holly Stover, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: April 25, 2023

RE: LD 1155, An Act to Address Legislative Salaries

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Good afternoon Senator Nangle and Representative Stover,

My name is Lane Sturtevant. I'm a resident of Warren. I am here today representing the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 1155, An Act to Address Legislative Salaries.

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, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

Part of working to encourage active participation in government is working to ensure that there is equal access not only to the ballot box but also to elected office. Anyone who is eligible to vote should be able to vote and anyone who is eligible to serve in public office should be able to run for office and serve if elected. That is why we have supported policies, like the Clean Elections program, that reduce the financial barrier to running for office.

LD 1155 addresses the financial barrier to serving in office that comes after someone is elected. As you very well know, serving in the State Legislature is an incredible commitment. The schedule of the legislative session and the time spent fulfilling the duties of the office make it difficult to maintain full-time employment unless a legislator has the privilege of being self-employed or of working an extremely flexible career. For working Mainers, then, the decision to run for state legislature involves the calculus of whether they can *afford* to serve in office. The current compensation for state legislators would not cover the cost of living expenses for most Mainers while the legislature was in session<sup>1</sup>, meaning that they would have to somehow make up those expenses in the remaining half of the year or rely on retirement funds, a partner's income, or family wealth.

As a consequence of the inadequate compensation for state legislators, many Mainers are barred from pursuing this form of public service. Inequalities in wealth and income levels mean that poor and working class Mainers, young Mainers, women, and Mainers of color are less likely to be able to afford to serve than older white men. I can tell you that I, personally, would not be able to serve in the State Legislature due to this financial barrier.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that even with lodging reimbursements to stay in Augusta – which have limitations anyway – a legislator would not be able to halt rent or mortgage payments without potentially losing their year-round housing.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy). We are also committed to working for “open, accountable, representative, and responsive government at every level” (LWV Impact on Issues, page 17). These positions lead us to support equitable compensation for those serving in the State Legislature.

We have not fully analyzed the cost of disruption to year-round employment or cost of living data in Maine in order to evaluate what specific compensation amount would do away with the financial barrier to service. With that caveat, we are not ready to comment on whether the specific amount proposed in LD 1155 represents equitable compensation, though we support increasing the compensation by any amount as a long overdue matter of moving toward equitable access to serving in the State Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.