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## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 53

### AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION DAY AS A STATE HOLIDAY

February 10, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the State and Local Government Committee. I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 53.

For years, schools across Maine have served as polling places, ensuring accessibility for voters while maintaining the safety and security of our students. Districts have implemented and refined comprehensive safety protocols to protect students and staff while allowing our communities to exercise their right to vote. These protocols have proven effective, balancing civic engagement with the critical responsibility of keeping students safe and our schools secure.

To further these goals, the Secretary of State established a Working Group in 2023 to study ways to safeguard the security of students and staff if their school buildings serve as polling places. We appreciate these efforts and feel they have led to productive conversations about how to strengthen these protocols for future elections.

A survey of school and municipal officials administered by this working group found that the vast majority of respondents feel safe at their polling place. Only about a third feel that all Maine schools should close on election day, and a majority agreed that the school year should not be extended in order to close for election day.

We believe in keeping our schools open. Maine's superintendents and educators are deeply committed to ensuring that students receive as much instructional time as possible. Establishing Election Day as a state holiday would require closing schools, disrupting learning and creating unnecessary challenges for families who rely on school schedules for consistency and childcare. In an era where learning time is more valuable than ever, we must prioritize keeping students in the classroom.

Election Day also presents a powerful, real-world learning opportunity. Schools use this day to engage students in discussions about democracy, civic responsibility, and the importance of voting. Many districts involve students in mock elections, discussions about the electoral process, and even opportunities to observe voting in action. This hands-on approach strengthens students' understanding of their role in our democracy—an experience that would be lost if schools were closed.

For these reasons, the MSSA/MSBA respectfully urges this committee to vote Ought Not to Pass. We strongly support efforts to promote voter participation but believe that keeping schools open while ensuring safe and secure polling places is the best path forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.