

TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: February 10, 2024

RE: LD 349, An Act Repeal the Laws That Allow Same-day Voter Registration

Dear Senator Hickman and Representative Supica,

My name is Carolyn Kinney. I am a resident of North Belgrade, and a sophomore at the University of Maine at Farmington, earning my degree in Political Science and Biology (pre-medical track) with a minor in Legal Studies. I am here today as a member of LWVME's Youth Council. This program helps young people to explore how Maine's government works and build their civic leadership skills. This testimony does not represent LWVME's view only those of the Youth Council. I am testifying against LD 349, and urge that you vote "Ought Not To Pass" on this bill.

On Election Day 2024, I registered and spoke with about 150 individuals on my campus to vote, ranging from students to faculty and community members. In celebration of Election Day, I organized an "Election Buffet" with an array of different foods and corresponding civic engagement puns. Originally, voter registration cards were set on the table as decor, but throughout the day, I quickly realized their necessity.

Prior to the event, I was under the impression that those who were planning to vote were already registered; it is a common assumption that this occurs upon eligibility. To my surprise, I assumed incorrectly. From the 150 people I spoke with, many of whom this was their first election, a majority were not registered due to their confusion over how. This confusion acted as a barrier to my community members exercising their right to vote. Because of same-day voter registration, I was able to clarify registration questions which once deterred participation at the polls.

Speaking as a college student, there are already many barriers that attempt to prevent us from voting – most particularly concerning the conflicts between towns and out-of-state college students. The University of Maine at Farmington is a state school that caters to its Maine community. An abundance of the Maine residents at the table had missed their absentee ballot application, were unable to return to their hometown to vote, and therefore did not plan on voting. Through same-day voter registration, these Mainers were able to still enact their Constitutional right to be civically engaged.

Democracy does not have a deadline. It is the Constitutional right of the American people, the Maine people, to vote until 8 p.m. when the polls close. The more limits that are put on the democratic process, the less democracy remains democratic. Same-day voter registration allowed for a broader participation of community members at the University of Maine at Farmington. Learning how to be civically engaged can be intimidating enough; adding additional deadlines may discourage voter turnout. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee