



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

DATE: February 24, 2025

RE: LD 454: An Act to Allow Candidates for Secretary of State or Attorney General to Participate in the Maine Clean Election Act

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Al Cleveland. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Advocacy Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. We are here in support of LD 454.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine since 1995 and is one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections. We are proud of our national reputation. But we are all Mainers, and our nonpartisan mission has always been with and for the people of this state.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections is neither for nor against the constitutional amendment to elect the positions of Secretary of State or Attorney General by popular vote. However, if this amendment is passed by this Legislature and the people of Maine, we support LD 454 to provide these candidates access to Maine's Clean Election program.

Public funding ensures that good candidates can have a shot at running for office even if they don't have deep pockets. It also promotes issue-oriented campaigns and direct discussions about what our state needs to move forward. It helps mitigate the role of big money coming in from out of state.

The Secretary of State is responsible for overseeing Maine's election process. The Attorney General is Maine's top law enforcement position and our state's legal representation. Both of these positions are state-wide offices, demanding the high levels of campaign spending required to run a state-wide race. That could make it difficult or impossible for some qualified candidates to compete without high-spending donors. Both the public and those serving in these high-level offices would benefit if they had confidence that their reelection campaigns would never require them to seek significant private funds, including from anyone in their professional orbit.

Maine voters have supported Clean Elections twice at the ballot. If this constitutional amendment were to pass, Mainers would want these offices to have access to Clean Elections funds.

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