



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

DATE: March 3, 2025

RE: LD 718 – An Act to Require Municipal Clerks to Issue Absentee Ballots Only to Residents of That Municipality and to Eliminate Ongoing Absentee Voter Status

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Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica.

My name is Al Cleveland. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Advocacy Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in opposition to 718.

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.

We support ongoing absentee voting, and we oppose its repeal. Ongoing absentee voting is a forward-thinking election policy that improves access and increases turnout wherein ballots are automatically delivered to requesting voters before every election. Participants don't need to fill out an application every time, and receiving the ballot can be a helpful reminder to the voter of an upcoming election. Voters can stay on the list as long as they are an active voter, and they can request to be removed at any time.

Ongoing absentee ballots particularly serve Maine voters who face competing Election-Day priorities and other obstacles, including voters with limited means, bilingual households, voters with disabilities, and voters – often elderly citizens – who live alone. According to the National Vote at Home Institute, 66% of absentee voters in Maine are repeat absentee voters.

Ongoing absentee voting may also increase turnout, particularly in local and special elections, which often have drastically lower turnout. With ongoing absentee voting, the voters who have requested to receive ballots automatically will be invited to participate in those elections by receiving a ballot in the mail.

Across the country, ongoing absentee voting is increasingly popular. States such as Montana and Arizona have offered this service securely and successfully for well over a decade, and several states have adopted the measure as voters have increasingly embraced absentee voting since 2020. Now is not the time for Maine to repeal this pro-voter measure.

We also object to the proposals in the bill to limit access to third-party ballot delivery. (While the bill seems to be saying that clerks may not issue absentee ballots to voters outside their municipality, we believe this provision would be mostly meaningless. Clerks cannot now issue absentee ballots to voters outside their jurisdiction. The only time their jurisdiction may go beyond their municipality is in the case of unorganized townships whose elections are administered by a nearby municipality. We don't suppose the sponsor means to suggest a reversal of that policy. But never mind that for a moment.)

We believe that third-party ballot delivery is an important service for people living in confined circumstances, without robust mobility or transportation. Whether it's a family member, a church member, or nonpartisan volunteer, people living in communal settings may need assistance in receiving their ballots and getting them timely returned. Should a daughter in Brewer not be permitted to help her mother in assisted living in Bangor? Should a trusted friend or church volunteer from Hodgdon not be permitted to help a disabled veteran living in Houlton? If you've ever tried to provide this service, you know that the safeguards in place are rigorous. The process already requires determination. Let's not make it impossible or illegal.

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