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****Testimony in Support of LD 266: An Act to Require the Updating of Voter Registration Signatures****

Good morning, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. My name is Katrina Smith, and I am honored to represent District 62. Today, I stand before you to present LD 266, *An Act to Require the Updating of Voter Registration Signatures*. This bill proposes a common-sense update to our voter registration process—one that addresses a flaw impacting Mainers across all parties and backgrounds. I believe this is a critical step toward ensuring every eligible voter can fully participate in our democracy.

Let me begin with a personal story that illustrates why this bill is necessary. When I ran for State Representative in 2022, I set out to collect the 25 signatures required to get my name on the ballot—a familiar process for many of you. As a former County Chair, I had access to the list of registered Republicans in my district, so I carefully ensured that the people I approached were on that list. I collected signatures from close acquaintances—people I knew well—and submitted them to the town clerk for verification, expecting a straightforward process.

However, when I returned to pick up the verified petition, I was stunned. Seven of my 25 signatures had been crossed out in red pen. Instead of seeing "25" next to the word "valid," I saw "18." I was seven signatures short of qualifying. Confused and concerned, I asked the town clerk for an explanation. The answer revealed a systemic issue: many signatures on file for voter registration hadn't been updated in years, and the clerk couldn't verify that the signatures on my petition matched those on record.

Here's why those signatures were rejected:

- One came from a resident who had registered before signatures were even required on file.
- Three were from women who had married and never updated their voter registration with their new names.
- One was from my own son, whose signature had evolved from the "18-year-old version" on his card to a more mature one.
- Two were from individuals whose signatures had changed due to medical issues—one had suffered a stroke, and the other was simply affected by age.

Now, I didn't mind going out to collect more signatures—that's not the issue. The real problem is that these were valid, registered voters whose intentions were disregarded due to an outdated process. They were, in essence, disenfranchised—not because they weren't eligible, but because the system failed them. Imagine if this had been their absentee ballot request. Would they have been denied their right to vote?

This isn't an isolated incident. Just last week, another legislator shared a nearly identical experience from their own campaign. This isn't about pointing fingers at town clerks—they're doing their best within system they have. It's about fixing a process that undermines the very foundation of our democracy.

I understand there may be concerns about the cost of implementing this bill or the workload of our town offices. But these cannot be excuses for denying Mainers their right to participate fully in our electoral process. Updating voter registration signatures doesn't need to be a burdensome or expensive endeavor. We could start with a simple initiative: notify voters to update their signatures and then systematically work through the rolls over time.

LD 266 is a straightforward solution to a real problem—one that affects the integrity of our elections and the rights of our citizens. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" and ensure that no Mainer is silenced by an outdated system. Thank you for your time and consideration.