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Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier presenting

LD 818, An Act to Allow Expenditure of Maine Clean Election Act Funding for the Care of Candidates' Dependents

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. My name is Kristen Cloutier, and I represent House District 94, which includes part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am pleased to sponsor **LD 818, An Act to Allow Expenditure of Maine Clean Election Act Funding for the Care of Candidates' Dependents**.

In May 2018, the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) made a groundbreaking ruling when it allowed Liuba Grechen Shirley, a congressional candidate from New York, to use campaign funds to cover her campaign-related childcare expenses.

This FEC ruling inspired state-level candidates across the country to seek clarity on campaign funds and childcare expenses. Both legislative and administrative channels have since been employed to expand access to campaign funding for relevant childcare costs, and several states have expanded the use for dependent care expenses.

Running for office is challenging, and doing so as the parent of young children or as the child of an aging adult that requires caregiving is even more demanding. I have personally experienced both of these situations. Beyond the time commitment required for campaigning, candidates face significant financial considerations—such as deciding to leave or take time off from full-time jobs or the necessity of securing dependent care support. We know dependent care in Maine is expensive and there is a significant shortage of providers across the state, and we know these barriers have historically excluded many parents and caregivers from participating fully in the political process. Given that Maine is a citizen's legislature, providing access to those who truly represent the people of this state, often those with decreased financial means, is even more critical to equitable lawmaking.

LD 818 would allow Maine Clean Elections candidates to use Clean Elections funds for paid caregiving services, specifically for the direct care of a dependent family member. The need for

such caregiving services must be directly connected to the candidate's campaign activities during the election cycle. It is also important to note that traditionally financed candidates in Maine are already able to use campaign funds for dependent care costs. Thus, LD 818 would simply create parity between the two models of campaign financing available to candidates.

This simple change would open the door for many parents and caregivers who want to run for a local or state office but who are held back by their need to provide care to family members.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.