



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

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

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 testifying in support of LD 818.

For 30 years, MCCE has advocated for Maine's Clean Election Act (MCEA) public funding system. We were there at the start to advocate for its enactment in 1996, during the early years when participation was ramping up, when budget challenges and court decisions threatened to weaken the program, and up to today when it is well-established and enjoys broad support among the candidates, voters, and the general public.

One of the clearest and most significant benefits of Clean Elections is the opportunity it provides for a wide range of Maine people to run for legislative seats. In every cycle, civic-minded Mainers choose to run in part because they can do so without engaging in the private fundraising that consumes many candidates for higher office. They appreciate the ability to keep their focus on voters in their district, and voters appreciate that, too.

Under the law, Clean Election funds may be used only for campaign-related expenses. Funds may not be used for personal expenses that a candidate would otherwise incur. The Ethics Commission publishes detailed guidelines to help candidates comply with this provision and ensure that public funds are used only for their intended purpose.

LD 818 defines a very narrow expansion of allowable expenditures so that Clean Election funds can be used to pay a caregiver so that a candidate or their partner may participate in a campaign activity. This is entirely consistent with the purpose of Clean Elections, and we believe it will make a difference.

Caregiving is essential to every family at some point, and being able to pay for that care during a busy campaign will ensure that candidates don't miss opportunities to contact and engage with voters.

We appreciate that Rep. Cloutier and other legislators who have participated in Clean Elections recognize the value in improving and updating the program in order to keep the doors open for all those civic-minded Mainers who will contemplate a run for office in the future. Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 818.