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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State  
Department of the Secretary of State

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Testifying in favor

L.D. 734 "An Act to Promote Voter Registration for Students in Maine's High Schools"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows, I live in Manchester, and I am the Secretary of State. I am speaking today in favor of L.D. 734.

Increasing voter participation in our elections is an important goal of the Department of the Secretary of State. Two important components to that are youth engagement and voter registration. Engaging with young Mainers as they age into being able to register to vote for the first time is an important foundational element of their civic life. And registering to vote here in Maine is an essential step in being able to vote in our elections. This bill advances both goals.

Right now, the Department prepares and provides voter registration cards and information to all public high schools each year. On National Voter Registration Day, I visited a few schools that were holding voter registration drives, and I know that in other schools, certain teachers take it upon themselves to encourage voter registration efforts. The feedback we receive regarding voter registration efforts in high schools is sporadic and anecdotal, so I can't say for certain what happens with the voter registration cards that arrive to each school each year.

This bill would move these efforts forward by establishing a voter registration drive coordinator in each school, ensuring that my office has that coordinator's name and title, and tasking that coordinator with conducting voter education and registration activities, as well as the delivery of completed applications to the voters' municipalities. Formalizing the work of registering young voters at a trusted institution like their high school will result in more young people registering to vote and participating in our elections – now, and for years to come.

I encourage you to support L.D. 734 and I thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.