



TO: The Honorable Joseph Baldacci
The Honorable Suzanne Salisbury, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: April 14, 2025

RE: LD 1388 - An Act to Replace the Participation Threshold in Votes to Adopt or Alter
a Municipal Charter with a Lower Approval Threshold

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.

My name is Debra McDonough. I am a resident of Scarborough, here to testify on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine. We support both LD 1388 and the related LD 1517 that you will also hear this morning. We want to thank Kevin Lamoreau for bringing the issue to our attention.

Both bills are designed to replace a participation threshold with an equivalent approval threshold. The League of Women voters supports approval thresholds, which promote sincere voting, over participation thresholds, which promote strategic voting, and I'll say more about our rationale in testimony on LD 1517. I want to take this opportunity to compare the bills, which provide different approaches to moving forward.

LD 1388, the bill currently in front of you, is essentially a pilot, addressing a single instance of a participation threshold, specifically with respect to the adoption or modification of municipal charters. LD 1517 intends to address all instances of participation thresholds across Maine statute. If the Legislature would prefer to proceed with a pilot, we support the choice made in this bill to first address votes on municipal charters, as it is our understanding that there are more votes on municipal charters than on the issues addressed in the other statutes with participation thresholds.

LD 1388 proposes an approval threshold to 'equal or exceed' a specified portion of the votes cast in the last gubernatorial election. This mirrors the existing language, but reduces the minimum number of votes in support by 1 (equals vs exceeds), relative to the equivalent participation threshold. LD 1517 suggests an approval threshold to 'exceed', rather than 'equal

or exceed,' in an effort to maintain the same minimum approval floor. We don't have a strong preference.

LD 1388 proposes edits to the statutory language beyond those required to replace the existing participation threshold with an approval threshold. LD 1517 does not propose additional edits, though the committee may notice in the text of LD 1517 that there is some variation in how these thresholds are described across the various statutes. We would certainly support edits to make these descriptions more consistent.

Again, the League of Women voters supports a transition to approval thresholds. I encourage each of you to join us in supporting either LD 1388, LD 1517 or an amended bill adopting selected aspects of each, and would be happy to address any questions you might have.