



## Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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### JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

#### **L.D. 160 “An Act to Eliminate REAL ID Requirements in Maine”**

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State and  
Cathie Curtis, Deputy Secretary for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles,  
Department of the Secretary of State

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee, I am here to provide testimony in opposition to L.D. 160 “An Act to Eliminate REAL ID Requirements in Maine” and to provide you with information that may be useful to you.

While we may agree with some of the reasons behind the bill, should this bill pass, we would become the only state in the union unable to provide its residents with a federally accepted credential, forcing Mainers to submit their data to the federal government in order to fly domestically, enter military bases and other federal facilities. Mainers who want a REAL ID or are required to get one by the federal government should not be prohibited from doing so.

The 2005 federal REAL ID Act, and the subsequent regulatory rules established by the Department of Homeland Security, established federal requirements for licenses and state IDs for use for federal purposes including to fly domestically. Furthermore, a REAL ID-compliant credential would be required to enter the Kittery Naval Shipyard, enter certain federal buildings, or visit a nuclear power plant.

The story of REAL ID here in Maine is a long one. Twenty years ago when the federal government first passed REAL ID, the Legislature initially prohibited the REAL ID program due to valid data security and privacy concerns. After threats from the federal government, the Maine Legislature reversed that decision in 2017.

In response to the 2017 legislation, BMV started issuing REAL IDs in 2019. As of January 1st, BMV has issued a REAL ID to 321,000 Mainers. Roughly 27.1% of all credentials issued by BMV are REAL ID-compliant.

Over the last 2 years, our Department focused on generating awareness of the federal deadline and providing education to Mainers on their options. Many Mainers are choosing REAL ID because:

- it provides a redundant option in addition to their passport (useful when a passport must be surrendered to be renewed);
- it fits in their wallet, unlike a passport (so they’re not likely to forget it going to the airport);
- BMV can produce a replacement in short order if needed (unlike a passport);
- and unlike a passport, their data is not transmitted to the federal government.

To further address that last point, the information provided to BMV by Mainers seeking a REAL ID is scanned and stored in secure BMV servers here in Maine. We absolutely do not transmit it to the federal government, but we must keep it available for audit purposes.

Unlike a handful of states that mandated the REAL ID format on all credentials, Maine's elected officials chose to keep it optional. That 2017 vision empowered Mainers to make a choice – and to be clear, many Mainers are making a conscious choice not to get a REAL ID-compliant credential, as is their right – and that's a policy making standard we ought to embrace and preserve.

To cancel the program now not only removes a secure, flexible option from our fellow Mainers, but it would also inconveniently force over 321,000 Mainers to pursue a replacement license or ID. I strongly encourage the Committee to vote "ought not to pass" on L.D. 160, and I look forward to fielding your questions.