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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
132nd Legislature

*Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski in support of*  
**LD 160, An Act to Eliminate REAL ID Requirements in Maine**  
*Before the Committee on Transportation*  
April 15, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Nicole Grohoski, and I am honored to represent the 22 communities of Senate District 7. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 160, “An Act to Eliminate REAL ID Requirements in Maine.”

Maine has a proud and consistent history of protecting its residents’ privacy. From being one of the first states to require a warrant for cellphone location data, to passing the country’s strongest internet privacy protections for internet service providers, our legislature has led on safeguarding personal freedom. Repealing participation in REAL ID is consistent with those deeply held values.

REAL ID, enacted by Congress in 2005 as a rider to a military spending bill, was passed without public debate or meaningful deliberation. It mandates the creation of a national identification system—an unfunded federal mandate that turns ordinary state-issued driver’s licenses into de facto national ID cards, linking personal information in a centralized, federally accessible database.

This kind of infrastructure presents serious risks. It creates a “one-stop shop” for hackers, identity thieves, and surveillance systems. Every time a REAL ID is used—whether to board a plane or enter a federal building—a record can be created and uploaded to a federal system, building a detailed profile of individuals’ movements and activities.

The dangers of centralized data systems are not theoretical. We’ve seen massive breaches of personal information in both government and private databases. REAL ID makes those breaches more damaging by consolidating sensitive personal data across states and systems.

Importantly, Mainers have already spoken clearly on this issue by delaying right up until the enforcement deadline of May 7, 2025, or outright refusing to get a REAL ID. This is not due to ignorance, but informed resistance. Mainers value their privacy and do not want their personal data funneled into a national tracking system.

REAL ID also creates disproportionate burdens for women—especially those who have changed their names through marriage, divorce, or widowhood. One constituent wrote to me about the experience of his 87-year-old mother, who has dementia and already possessed a REAL ID from Florida. Despite that, Maine’s Bureau of Motor Vehicles was not able to issue her a Maine REAL ID without a full, original-paper trail documenting every name change in her life: marriage certificates, divorce decrees, and death certificates—documents she no longer has, and in some cases cannot even remember enough detail to retrieve. After four marriages—one of them abroad—it became an impossible task. This kind of bureaucratic barrier is not only unreasonable, it’s cruel, especially for elderly or vulnerable individuals.

One of the most alarming aspects of REAL ID is that in order for a state to comply, it must maintain a database of ALL driver’s licenses and IDs that is accessible to all other states. In order to meet this requirement, the State of Maine uploaded information about all of us, not just those of us who opted into REAL ID, into a national database in December. Mainers who expressly opted out of REAL ID to protect their sensitive information are now, most likely without their knowledge, part of the same national database they wished to avoid.

Finally, REAL ID does not protect us from terrorism. A driver’s license or ID card reveals nothing about intent. Identity-based security has been shown to be ineffective at preventing acts of violence, and the focus on documentation may, in fact, drive those with valuable information or security concerns further into the shadows.

Repealing our participation in REAL ID sends a clear message: Maine stands for privacy, civil liberties, and a common-sense approach to public policy. I urge this committee to support this bill and reaffirm our commitment to the rights, dignity, and security of all Mainers.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.