



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony
In Support of

LD 397, *"An Act to Require a Voter to Show Photographic Identification"*

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Reagan Paul and I am proud to represent House District 37. Thank you for allowing me to present my bill LD 397, *"An Act to Require a Voter to Show Photographic Identification"*, a bill that strengthens Maine's election integrity by requiring photographic identification for in-person and absentee voting. This measure reflects the overwhelming will of Mainers, with 83% of over 3,400 respondents in a 2024 WABI poll supporting voter ID laws, and aligns with federal and state case law affirming the state's compelling interest in preventing voter fraud. By providing free special voter ID cards, the bill ensures accessibility for all, addressing concerns while safeguarding our sacred right to vote. The legislation amends 21-A MRSA to mandate a valid photo ID—such as a Maine driver's license, nondriver ID, U.S. passport, military ID, or concealed handgun permit with a photograph—for in-person and absentee voting. College or university IDs are excluded to ensure standardized, reliable identification, and non-photo documents, like birth certificates or Social Security cards, are removed as acceptable voter registration forms. To eliminate barriers, the bill requires the Secretary of State to issue free special voter photo ID cards, with rulemaking to facilitate implementation, effective January 1, 2026.

The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* (2008) provides clear legal support, upholding Indiana's photo ID requirement and ruling that the state's interest in preventing voter fraud and maintaining public confidence justifies minimal burdens on voters, stating, "There is no question about the legitimacy or importance of the State's interest in counting only the votes of eligible voters." This bill, with its free ID provision, mirrors Indiana's framework, ensuring compliance with *Crawford's* standards. In Maine, Superior Court Justice William Stokes' ruling in *Maine Republican Party v. Dunlap* (2020) further validates this approach, holding that "the State's important interest in deterring and preventing election fraud" supports reasonable regulations, even without widespread fraud evidence. Stokes emphasized that slight burdens on voting are permissible to protect election integrity, and this bill's photo ID requirement for absentee ballots directly addresses his concern about regulating ballot handling.

Secretary Bellows has expressed concerns about voter ID laws, referencing a 2011 Elections Commission report and potential burdens on elderly and minority voters, but these objections are outdated, unsupported by evidence, and addressed by the bill's provisions. Secretary Bellows cited the 2011 report, led by then-Secretary Charles Summers, where a 4-1 vote opposed voter ID recommendations. This report, over a decade old, used speculative language when discussing fraud and acknowledged factors supporting voter ID, such as the ubiquity of IDs in daily life for Social Security, Medicare, and travel. Today, 35 states have voter ID laws, and Maine's

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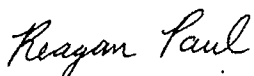
83% public support in the 2024 WABI poll reflects a clear mandate. Ignoring this bill dismisses the will of Mainers. Concerns about elderly Mainers facing barriers are overstated, as the 2011 report noted that IDs are required for routine activities like banking and healthcare, suggesting most elderly Mainers already possess a driver's license, nondriver ID, or passport. For those without, the bill's free special voter ID cards eliminate hurdles, and *Crawford* upheld such provisions as sufficient, noting that they mitigate burdens, allowing full participation.

Secretary Bellows and critics have cited studies, like those from UC San Diego and Michigan State using 2006-2014 CCES data, claiming voter ID laws suppress minority turnout, but these were discredited by researchers from Stanford, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania, who identified calculation errors and unreliable survey data, concluding that voter ID laws do not significantly affect turnout, including among minorities. Georgia's post-2008 voter ID experience confirms this: Black and Hispanic turnout increased, outpacing population growth, with a 2022 University of Georgia poll reporting no negative experiences among Black voters. A 2021 Monmouth University poll found over 80% of non-white Americans support voter ID, and Pamela Denise Long, a Black American consultant, argued in a 2022 Newsweek article that voter ID protects minority communities by ensuring election integrity, refuting claims of racism. Secretary Bellows has also suggested voter fraud is negligible, implying ID requirements are unnecessary, but *Crawford* clarified that states need not prove widespread fraud, as "the risk of voter fraud [is] real" and undermines public confidence. Stokes' ruling emphasized deterrence over detection, and anecdotal evidence from Maine's campaign trails—voter rolls listing multiple voters at nonexistent or abandoned addresses—highlights vulnerabilities that ID requirements can address. With 35 states implementing voter ID without turnout suppression, Maine can adopt this proven safeguard.

Opponents often label voter ID laws as discriminatory or rooted in "white supremacy," relying on emotional rhetoric rather than evidence, which distracts from data showing no adverse impact on minority or elderly voters. Assuming these groups cannot obtain IDs is a patronizing stereotype, contradicted by their routine use of IDs for daily activities. Additionally, declaring that racial minorities are not capable of acquiring photo ID is not just disrespectful, but dare I say - peak racism. The bill's free ID provision ensures accessibility, aligning with *Crawford*'s approval of measures to protect voting rights. As Long noted, failing to secure elections harms minority communities by diluting their voting power, particularly amid concerns about non-citizen voting. LD 397 strengthens Maine's elections by requiring photo ID, a measure supported by 83% of Mainers and upheld by *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* and *Maine Republican Party v. Dunlap*. The bill addresses Secretary Bellows' concerns through free IDs, ensuring no voter is disenfranchised, and aligns with evidence from Georgia and academic studies showing no turnout suppression.

Voting is sacred, and this bill honors that by deterring fraud and restoring public confidence. I urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" and respect the will of Maine's people. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Reagan Paul
State Representative