

Testimony in opposition to LD 1149
Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee
May 2, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, thank you for accepting my testimony.

My name is Christine Szalay and I live in Damariscotta.

I am testifying in opposition to LD 1149 because I believe it will make voting much more challenging for vulnerable populations in our state.

I spent ten years working with isolated seniors, many of whom were homebound by virtue of medical challenges or because of poverty. Imagine barely having money to buy stamps, having to purchase minutes on a flip phone, and not having any transportation options due to inability to drive or own a car. You live in a rural area where, even if you can get to your town office, it's only open a few days a week. How on earth are you supposed to get to a DMV office or your town office to obtain and then submit the documents required to register to vote or vote absentee?

Or maybe you were recently hospitalized and were lucky enough to be discharged but admitted to a nursing facility for skilled care and it's in a new town. Your only relative is a nephew who is working two jobs and can't get you over to the town office to show your ID and vote. He can't request an absentee ballot for you since he's not immediate family. You can't request one by phone.

And then there's the question of making a copy of your ID to mail in with your absentee ballot. Many people do not have the ability to scan and print a document. Getting out to a library or shop with a copier is not always a viable option.

The litany of requirements for in-person or absentee voting in this piece of legislation is nothing more than an attempt to keep certain members of our population from voting. Forms, signatures, who can assist voters in submitting absentee ballots, etc. are all attempts to throw roadblocks at people trying to do their civic duty and have their vote count.

Many older Mainers have lost much of their independence and have experienced many losses in their lives. We should not be adding to that by taking away their right to vote.

I urge you to vote ONTP on this bill.