

Friday May 2, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

My name is Bella and I am a rural youth organizer with JustME for JustUS (JMJU) and I am here on behalf of JMJU to ask you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1149.

At JMJU we value the voices of Maine youth, especially those from rural communities. Anyone living in a rural community knows how hard it can be to get to the polls, and this bill would make that much harder by putting restrictions on absentee voting.

This bill will significantly impact young people in rural Maine. Eliminating ongoing absentee ballots and shortening the early voting period reduces accessibility, especially for those with limited transportation, which is often the case with youth in general. For the last election, I requested a ballot by phone and mailed it in with the prepaid postage because I was at college and wouldn't be able to drive home for election day. Many college students face transportation barriers and some don't have resources to pay for postage. Restrictions on absentee ballots will make it harder for college students to vote.

This bill will affect people of all generations across Maine particularly seniors, people with disabilities, and youth who cannot access transportation in rural areas. Preventing trusted individuals from returning ballots and restricting ballot drop-off locations creates even more hurdles for Mainers to jump through to exercise their right to vote. Moreover, prohibiting prepaid return postage and phone ballot requests creates additional barriers for low-income Mainers and anyone without internet access, but also specifically harms young people who might not have the means to pay return postage or drive somewhere to request a ballot.

As a young Mainer and advocate for rural Maine youth, I urge you to oppose LD 1149 and send this measure to the ballot where voters can reject it.

Thank you for listening,

Bella Sturtevant

