

**Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989**

**In Opposition to LD 1149, An Act to Require an Individual to Present Photographic Identification for
the Purpose of Voting**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
11am Friday, May 2, 2025,
State House Room 437 and Electronically**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I'm Beth White, Director of Politics and Legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. The Maine Service Employees Association represents over 13,000 workers, both active and retired, across the state.

We are here to urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1149, the voter-suppression referendum, and instead allow it to go out to a statewide vote on the November 4, 2025, ballot. All voters deserve the right to vote against this extremely ill-conceived legislation.

Like most Mainers, members of our union pride themselves on being highly engaged in legislative and electoral processes at the local, state and national levels. Maine's absentee ballot provisions make it possible for scores of our members to vote. We're pleased to report that in the November 5, 2024, General Elections, over 2,500 MSEA-SEIU members voted by absentee ballot.

Our members who vote by absentee ballot do so for many reasons. Many work long or irregular hours, or work second jobs, or are subject to mandatory overtime, all of which make their work schedules unpredictable. Voting by absentee ballot is popular among our members with school-age children due to the need to provide childcare. Many of our members also are retired workers, including some who have medical or mobility issues that preclude them from standing in long voter lines or even traveling to their municipal clerk's office to vote.

Let me provide an example from within our membership. One couple whom we represent are a husband and wife. They are both retired state workers. She suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and has degenerative disc disease, which complicates her ability to walk. She also has arthritis and uses portable oxygen when necessary. She finds as she gets older that she has to adapt to certain things, even just cooking. She brings a stool over to the counter to cook because it's helpful. And when she goes outdoors to garden, she now has tall planters for her patio so they are more accessible compared to crawling on the ground working on raised beds. In short, she needs accommodations as she goes about her daily life. One of the big issues for her is voting. She prides herself on never missing an election. She used to vote in person, but standing in a voting line became too difficult for her, so lately she's been voting by absentee ballot.

Her husband recently moved into a nursing home because his level of required medical care was too much for her to provide in their home. He is diabetic and has kidney disease. He needs absentee ballots in order to vote. That's the only way he will be able to vote.

Those are just two stories from our membership about why it's urgent that this voter-suppression referendum be sent out to a statewide vote, so that all Maine voters have the opportunity to vote against the elimination of ongoing absentee ballots despite their popularity among Maine seniors and people with disabilities.

All Maine people deserve the right to decide for themselves whether to cut the time period for absentee voting by two days. We all deserve a right to vote on whether to prohibit voters from allowing a trusted third party, such as a family member or friend, from dropping off their ballot.

All Mainers deserve the right to decide whether to eliminate local control by limiting the number of secure ballot drop-off boxes that a municipality can utilize. And we also deserve the right to vote on whether to burden Maine's municipal clerks with additional mandates – such as requiring them to have not one but two people together check the ballot boxes, instead of the clerk or a trusted member of their staff.

For all of these reasons, please vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1149, and instead send the voter-suppression referendum out to a statewide vote. Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.