

Date: May 2, 2025

RE: LD 1149 — An Act to Require an Individual to Present Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Karen Tcheyan, and I live in Harpswell.

I am testifying in opposition to LD 1149. I was introduced to what is now LD 1149 last year when I encountered a person outside of my polling place collecting signatures for a Voter ID referendum question. She asked if I would be willing to sign the petition to prevent voter fraud in our state. I asked her for data or examples of voter fraud, and she had none. She also didn't mention any of the restrictions on absentee voting included in the referendum question. She could only offer a few unlikely and hypothetical "what if" scenarios. It made me want to learn more about this citizen initiative leading me now to believe its goal is really voter suppression, not voter integrity.

Maine has an exemplary record and reputation for secure, efficient and accessible voting practices and systems. This bill is unnecessary and a waste of resources, both human and financial. It comes with a fiscal note of over \$1.4 million over the next two fiscal years and estimated recurrent costs of about \$300,000 in years following. Why should a penny be spent on addressing a problem that doesn't exist? This bill is a classic case of a solution in search of a problem.

The name of the bill does not fully describe its intent. In addition to requiring photo ID documentation to vote at the polls, LD 1149 will make it more difficult to vote absentee. As a largely rural, elderly, and working-class state, many, many Mainers depend on absentee voting to cast their ballots. If passed, we would no longer be able to sign up to have an absentee ballot mailed to us automatically for each election cycle or be able to request an absentee ballot over the phone. Also, the bill would limit the number of drop boxes to one per municipality. This does not serve our larger population cities and towns. Finally, the bill usurps the authority of our town clerks. It calls for the creation of a bipartisan team of election officials, in place of our town clerks, to remove absentee ballots from secured drop boxes. Why? To my knowledge, there is no consequential evidence of incompetence by or mistrust of our municipal clerks to support the need for this new entity.

In sum, the dearth of any significant evidence of voter fraud in our state and the lack of full disclosure about the contents of this bill by those behind it make it clear that LD 1149 is unnecessary at best and an attempt to suppress voter rights and ballot access at worse. Maine has real problems that need our resources, problem solving skills and

commitment. This is not one of them, but rather a manufactured concern designed to cast unfounded fear and mistrust among Maine's electorate.

I urge the committee to oppose this bill. Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify.