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## **Testimony of Representative Seth Berry in Presenting LD 859, “An Act To Allow Municipalities To Use Ranked-choice Voting in Municipal Elections”**

Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Matlack and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Seth Berry and I represent House District 55, the towns of Bowdoin, Bowdoinham and most of Richmond, as well as beautiful Swan Island on the Kennebec. Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 859, "An Act To Allow Municipalities To Use Ranked-choice Voting in Municipal Elections."

Maine laws were first written before the evolution of ranked-choice or “instant runoff” voting, a method providing voters with more options and flexibility, while also avoiding “spoiler effect” outcomes in which the majority of voters end up with their least favorite candidate as a winner. Due to this accident of history, our laws do not provide for ranked-choice voting (RCV) to be used in most Maine towns.

The exception here is the small minority of municipalities that have adopted a charter. Portland, for instance, has used RCV so for over ten years. However, non-charter municipalities, roughly 413 of 488 municipalities, simply do not have this option.

The goal of this concept draft is to provide flexibility and local control over local elections to all of our local governments.

While I am engaged with a few municipalities in this effort, I do not want to waste the committee’s valuable time on details when the specific language of this concept draft have not yet been drafted. Rather, I would like to present you with well-vetted language in the second regular session of the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature, in January 2022.

For this reason I ask that the Committee carry this bill over to that time, at which I would bring to you a sponsor’s amendment for public input. Should I not have language I consider workable by that time, I would instead ask you to vote the bill ONTP.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.