



## Maine Municipal Association

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### Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

#### In Opposition to

*LD 1051 - An Act To Promote Civic Engagement and Voter Participation for Young People by Lowering the Voting Age for Municipal Elections to 16 Years of Age*

April 12, 2021

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LDs 1051 on behalf of MMA at the direction of our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee.

Municipal officials believe that engagement of youth in civil society is a vitally important goal, and one that begins with exercising your civic duty to become an informed citizen. Lowering the voting age requires an increased investment in civics education, which has been a decidedly missing curriculum piece of the public education system for at least a generation.

As the voting age of 18 is also clearly defined in the Maine Constitution under Article 2 Sec. 1, a state constitutional amendment is required to rephrase the age provision. This requires ratification from Maine's eligible voters through a statewide referendum regardless of if the elections at question are exclusively municipal.

Alternatively, because Maine's election laws present the age of 18 as a restriction, and not a grant in Title 30-A § 2501, the law would need to be explicit that municipal elections are not governed by state law to circumvent the Constitutional age restriction.

If a municipality takes action to lower its voting age, this action could be challenged in court—and the state court may interpret the voting age provision as meaning that the right to vote is reserved exclusively to those over 18. Nothing in the drafted bill would protect municipalities from this possible litigation.

Additionally, the barriers to provide proof of residency, enrollment in a party, and proof of citizenship to vote in municipal elections will not be changed by this proposed bill. Each already remain barriers for residents who pay rent, utilities, and other bills in the name of a co-habitant.

While officials support the encouragement of youth participation in government, even if LD 1051 were amended to be a constitutional amendment question for Maine's voters to decide, they believe the money required to administer the question or litigate subsequent the outcomes of future municipal

elections would be better invested in promoting and supporting civics engagement for Maine's youth and public at large.

For all these reasons municipal officials are opposed to LD 1051 as drafted.