



Testimony in Support of LD 1629:

“An Act to Require Legislative Committees to Provide Equal Time to Each Member of the Public Who Testifies”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting LD 1629, “An Act to Require Legislative Committees to Provide Equal Time to Each Member of the Public Who Testifies.”

At its core, LD 1629 promotes a simple yet profound principle: equality in public discourse. In a representative democracy, the Legislature must strive to provide equal opportunity for citizen engagement, especially during public hearings—the very forum where the voices of Maine people are most directly heard. This bill ensures that each Mainer, regardless of background, organizational affiliation, or political persuasion, is granted the same opportunity to participate in the legislative process.

LD 1629 helps by mandating that legislative committees give equal time to all members of the public who testify during public hearings. This does not stifle debate—it strengthens it by upholding the principles of fairness and transparency. As every citizen has one vote, each should be entitled to an equal voice in public testimony.

Some may argue that this will make hearings less efficient. We disagree. A commitment to fairness may require more careful scheduling or time limits across the board, but efficiency must never come at the cost of democratic integrity or civic engagement. Legislators are stewards of the public trust, and part of that responsibility is ensuring that all voices are welcomed and heard on equal footing.

Further, this bill aligns with Maine’s long-standing tradition of citizen engagement and participatory government. It embodies Maine Policy Institute’s belief that government should serve the people, not special interests, and that policy decisions should be grounded in an open, inclusive process.

We urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1629. By ensuring equal time for all testifiers, the Legislature affirms its commitment to a fairer, more transparent, and more accountable process for all Mainers. Thank you for your time and consideration.