



TOWN OF KITTERY, MAINE
200 ROGERS ROAD
KITTERY, MAINE 03904
PH 207-475-1313 FAX 207-439-6806

Date: **March 4, 2021**

To: **Senator Louis J. Luchini, Senate Chair
Representative Chris Caiazzo, House Chair
And members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee**

Re: **LD 208 – An Act to Expand Access to Absentee Ballots**

Position: **Strongly Oppose**

From: **Karen Estee – Town Clerk/Registrar of Voters, Kittery**

Myself and my team in Kittery are strongly opposed to LD 208, voters have 90 days to request an absentee ballot for any election. We feel that, that is plenty of time for ANY VOTER to request an absentee ballot. If there is a Special Circumstance, of course they may request one, but those are actually few and far between.

The three days before any election is incredibly stressful and incredibly busy for everyone in the Clerk's office. As other Clerks have expressed the workload is overwhelming during this time. With prepping the polling location, most times it's offsite of the Town Office. Processing thousands of online requests, which is where we receive most of our absentee requests, this process is very time consuming. Processing and receiving absentee ballots from voters, compiling the voting lists the paperwork is endless, coordinating Ballots Clerks, right up to the last minute at times. Not to mention how this will delay results if we're processing absentee ballots after the polls close.

This is just a small sample of what we do in addition to our role's as Municipal Clerks.

Also, where would the additional staffing and funding come from if we MUST keep the Town Hall open for voters who want to absentee vote on Election day? Our budgets are already stretched so thin and that would require extensive training for Ballot Clerks as my experienced staff would have to stay behind to staff the office if a voter comes to absentee vote.

In addition, if a voter comes to the polls on Election day, wouldn't they just Vote in person? What would be purpose of the **50 steps it takes to issue an absentee ballot, if the voter is standing right there??**

We know that 95% of all Clerks in Maine have agreed that the timeframe to request an absentee ballot is NOT disenfranchising ANY voter.

Please do not eliminate the three-day deadline, please consider the Clerks, their Staff and the Integrity of the Election process.

We also believe that a third-party runner has enough time to return an absentee ballot for another voter. Most voters understand deadlines and timeframes, this is nothing new to our voters.

Again, we believe there is more than enough time for a voter to vote in the presence of the Clerk, prior to election day. I am the Town Clerk and the Registrar of Voter's where would my role be on election day? At the office issuing absentee ballots and voters' voting in my presence? Or, at the polling location managing the election, the workers, the machines, the ballots, the poll watchers, the voters and the Integrity of the Election Process?

Thank you for allowing me this testimony today, as part of the Maine Town and City Clerk's Association, we are strongly opposed to LD 208.

