

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, Esq.

LD 208 - Ought to Pass

An Act To Expand Access to Absentee Ballots

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

March 8, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, good morning. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am Policy Counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 208.

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy. Maine has a long history of protecting voting rights for all qualified people, and the ACLU of Maine works to preserve and strengthen those protections. We support efforts to make it easier for more qualified people to vote, and oppose measures that would prevent Mainers from participating fully and fairly in our elections.

This bill would make three important improvements to our absentee voting system. If passed, it would eliminate restrictions on the issuance of absentee ballots after the third day before an election, remove deadlines for the return of an absentee ballot by a third person, and allow a voter to vote by absentee ballot in the presence of the clerk until 8:00 p.m. on the day of any election. Each of these changes is necessary, common sense, and would meaningfully expand the franchise in Maine.

We are proud that Maine is a leader on voting rights, and urge this committee to protect that tradition. Please support this bill.