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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**

LD 1126 “An Act To Update the Voter Registration Process”

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Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Shenna Bellows, Maine Secretary of State and I’m here to offer testimony in favor of LD 1126, “An Act To Update the Voter Registration Process.”

Mainers – no matter who they are or where they come from – deserve the freedom to exercise their right to vote, and to have that process be convenient, easy to use, and secure. And while our State has long been a leader in that field, we cannot rest on our laurels. My top priorities as Secretary of State are technology modernization and equity and inclusion. Our goal is to make voting as accessible, convenient and secure as possible. Online voter registration utilizes technology to make voter registration easier and more efficient for voters and election administrators alike. Additionally, online voter registration will help us reach more Maine citizens to increase voter participation from more communities, advancing our goals of equity and inclusion.

Americans today are accustomed to having the option to conduct nearly all their life’s business online. Banking, grocery shopping, medical appointments, vehicle registrations – even vehicle purchases – can be safely conducted online. It is a reasonable expectation that voters be able to register to vote online as well. Nearly all other States – 40 states plus DC – offer this convenient option, and we should not let Maine fall further behind in a field where we often lead the way.

An additional benefit to online voter registration is that it will also be easier on the municipal clerks’ end of the process. Transcription errors, illegible addresses, and time spent entering data will be reduced when a voter’s information is submitted to the municipal clerk via an online portal, rather than on the traditional paper form. To ensure accuracy of our central voter registration system, the municipal clerks will still review the filing, and determine whether it is new or if there is an existing record for that voter that needs to be updated with the new data provided.

Developing and implementing an online voter registration portal will take time and effort from our Information Services team, but in my time as Secretary so far, I have been continually impressed by their expertise and work ethic. We appreciate the sponsor’s willingness to change the date to

November, 2023, so we can leverage the advantages of a new central voter registration system scheduled for implementation in 2023 and implement online voter registration well.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I am happy to answer any questions.