



Testimony in support of LD 1126
An Act to Update the Voter Registration Process

Senator Luchini, Representative Ciazso and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE) and am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1126.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. As a part of our drive to achieve this goal and empower people to make decisions best for themselves and their future, PPNNE maintains a voter registration program through the posting of voter registration information in our health centers, in-person outreach to under registered populations on college campuses and at community events, and through direct contact with people over the phone, through the mail and on doors.

The degree to which the pandemic highlighted the structural inequities of Maine's current voter registration system cannot be overstated. Virtually every aspect of our efforts to engage with and help register Mainers were adversely impacted by the crisis: registration at health centers was no longer possible due to concerns health and safety concerns; campuses shutdown and community events were cancelled or moved online; direct outreach efforts--- especially direct contact with Mainers who had never been registered to vote before-- were hampered by out-of-date requirements to furnish a printed copy of a document in order to establish proof of residence, a requirement especially challenging for young and voters unlikely to have access to a printer.

Compounding all of these issues, would-be voters who we did reach and filled out registration forms were then faced with a choice that failed to acknowledge the moment we are living in; either return the forms in-person to their town clerk's office or entrust their ability to exercise their constitutional right to an increasingly strained postal system which was at times averaging nearly two weeks for in-state deliveries.

It shouldn't have to be this way. Maine should join the forty other states that have already found a solution to these problems by creating online voter registration systems. Online voter

registration is a decades-proven modernization that streamlines the process to make registration as simple and effective as possible.

LD 1126 would allow unregistered Mainers to engage in the democratic process safely and securely utilizing technology the vast majority of Mainers have access to today. The system proposed will not only allow more Mainers to participate in our elections for the first time, it will help those currently registered continue to do so by enabling them to quickly and easily update their voter registrations, include new addresses and party enrollment changes. Beyond easing access to the registration and update process for new and current voters respectively, online registration carries with it significant ancillary benefits; offering more security and clarity of data than paper forms do; eliminating the need for manual data entry and deciphering handwritten data, which in turn decreases the chance for human error on both ends thereby reducing the need for clerks to contact voters and ask for remediations.

LD 1126 is a much needed common sense evolution of our current voter registration system which will help to ensure that all eligible Mainers are able to exercise their right to participate in the democratic process safely and securely regardless of health, location or financial status it for these reasons that I strongly urge you to vote to pass LD 1126.