

Written Testimony addressed to the
Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs in support of LD1126
Cross Building, Rm 202
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

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Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Andrew Lardie and I live in Brunswick. I'm here today to support LD 1126, An Act to Update the Voter Registration Process, because it will remove significant barriers to the franchise, particularly for younger voters, and shore up the health of our democracy at a time when it is under siege.

I oversee non-partisan voter support at Bowdoin College through my role in the McKeen Center for the Common Good. Currently, my small crew spends a massive amount of time each year manually registering not only new students who want to vote locally, but also re-registering every local student voter whose dorm assignment has changed since the last election. The error rate for voters filling out paper registration applications is very high, even with assistance. So we audit forms and track voters down to make corrections before they are passed onto the Town Clerk. Then, despite the Clerk's best efforts, transcription errors result in inaccurate records and force some students to register again on election day. This process is one reason that even in the record-turnout election of 2018, 48% of Maine's eligible college students did not cast a ballot.¹ For all eligible Mainers under age 25, fully 70% did not vote that fall.² Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way.

As you know, 40 other states have implemented online voter registration (OVR). The increased accessibility, efficiency, and accuracy of OVR would improve the health of Maine's democracy in several ways. It would eliminate significant barriers to voting for Mainers who have to move around, and for those living in towns with limited services. And it would allow educators like me to focus on the deeper work that is needed: helping young Mainers build the civic skills to become lifelong active citizens, engaged in the political process. This is how we can reverse the rise of political cynicism and despair that is evident, particularly among college men³ who have been targeted by reactionary conspiracy-peddling in recent years.⁴

Research shows that voting, or not voting, is not so much an annual choice as it is a habit, and one that is best developed early.⁵ Please vote yes on LD 1126 so all Mainers can access the franchise and build that habit. Thank you again for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Andrew Lardie
Brunswick

References:

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4. Antidefamation League: White Supremacist Propaganda Surges on Campus. 2018. <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/white-supremacist-propaganda-surges-on-campus>
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