

**TESTIMONY**

**In support of**

**LD 1126: “An Act to Update the Voter Registration Process”**

**Grace Leavitt, President, Maine Education Association**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on  
Veterans and Legal Affairs  
April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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

My name is Grace Leavitt. I am a Spanish teacher, National Board Certified, on leave from Greely High School while serving as President of the Maine Education Association. The MEA has nearly 24,000 members—faculty and staff in our pre-K-12 public schools, our institutions of higher education, and many dedicated retired educators.

I am writing on behalf of our members in support of LD 1126, “An Act to Update the Voter Registration Process”.

One of the core values of the Maine Education Association is as follows:

Democracy: We believe public education is the cornerstone of our state. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

LD 1126 provides a way to encourage and support greater engagement in our democracy, both for educators and for our students once they are old enough to vote. Online voter registration increases access to voter registration for educators who work long days (it is a myth that teachers work only from 8-3) and often do not have the flexibility during the day that others may have, while also, of course, increasing access for others in similar work situations. For students, this system will make it efficient and convenient for them to become registered as soon as they come of age. A study done in 2019<sup>1</sup> showed that less than 1 percent of 17-year-olds had pre-registered to vote. Online registration will certainly greatly increase the number of registered voters and encourage our young people to engage in our democracy to be sure their voices are included in the decisions that will impact them throughout their adult lives.

This past year has pushed many more of us to do many more things online in order to slow the transmission of COVID-19, even those of us, like myself, who were less apt to do so. Taking

care of all sorts of business and transactions online has become an ordinary part of our lives. For many more of us, especially our younger population, the expectation has become that we should be able to take care of a wide variety of things via online systems. With the secure, accessible system called for in LD 1126 Maine will be not only making things more convenient for its people but will also be increasing participation in our democracy. That can only be a good thing for all of us.

We urge your support of LD 1126.

Thank you for your time, and I am glad to answer any questions.

*Grace Leavitt*

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President, Maine Education Association

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/study-shows-less-than-1-percent-of-maine-teens-are-pre-registered-to-vote/97-6397da26-46de-42f9-b935-3458d8a2b832>

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