

Good Morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Riley McNeil, and I am an intern with Homeless Voices for Justice. Homeless Voices for Justice is a grassroots organization, organized by people who are or have experienced homelessness. We work for social change with, and on behalf of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty. We seek to empower people experiencing homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies through protest, education, positive policy change, and reform. I am here to testify in support of LD 1126, An Act to Update the Voter Registration Process.

Every year, Homeless Voices for Justice launches its You Don't Need a Home to Vote campaign. Since its inception, HVJ has registered over 2,500 homeless and low-income voters. As an intern in this program, I have become aware of all the barriers to voting when you are experiencing homelessness. The constituents we worked with often had competing needs to be met- some needed to find shelter or food for the night. One incident that comes to mind was waiting in line with a client for over an hour. Their bag ended up ripping and they had to leave to get it fixed- all of their belongings were in that bag. Another example of a barrier to registering to vote when you are experiencing homelessness is not having a secure place to put important documents, such as a voter registration card.

I believe that this bill would address some of those barriers. By having an online voter registration system, those interested in voting can quickly register to vote without having to worry about losing their voter registration card, and don't have to wait outside for extended amounts of time. This bill would also support their privacy.

If this bill were to pass, I envision how much easier it would be to support people wanting to participate in our state's democracy. As Homeless Voices for Justice, we believe everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status or housing status has a right to having their voice heard and access to equitable voting. Thank you for your time.