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I speak today in support of LD 1061, An Act To Protect Minor Political Parties That Seek Official Party Status. There is a lot of talk about voter suppression today. Most of that has to do with keeping individuals from voting. But equally concerning are efforts to keep alternative parties from organizing and getting on the ballot. More than 60 percent of the public say they want an alternative to the two major parties, but burdensome rules enacted by those two parties continue to strangle good faith efforts to create alternatives. Maine is a big state with a small population spread over great distances. This makes it especially difficult for petitioning and basic organizing, even without a pandemic to contend with. The current requirements of 5,000 registered members to qualify as a party in Maine are too high and create a huge barrier to organizing alternatives to the entrenched parties. This denies people their right of free association within the political process and it shuts out candidates and alternative voices that independent-minded Mainers are anxious to hear. Let the free market of ideas establish what rises to the top, not an arbitrary requirement that snuffs out new parties just as they are growing and starting to get the attention of the public. Support the free market of ideas, not voter suppression.