

TESTIMONY OF MEAGAN SWAY

LD 1126 – Ought To Pass

An Act To Update the Voter Registration Process

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

April 5, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, greetings. My name is Meagan Sway, and I am Policy Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I am here to testify in favor of LD 1126. This bill would strengthen our democracy by increasing access to the ballot box and removing unnecessary hurdles.

Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is protected by more constitutional amendments than any other civil right we enjoy in this country. The 1st, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th and 26th amendments protect this right that is fundamental to our democracy because the right to vote is protective of all other rights. Because of this, it is crucial that policymakers advance reforms to ensure that all eligible citizens who want to cast a ballot and participate in our elections are able to do so. LD 1126 would provide just such an initiative. Online voter registration would make voting more accessible, allowing people to register without paper forms and without mail, and to prepare to vote in the same way that they conduct an increasing amount of business and personal affairs: online. This is especially true for people for whom in-person registration is currently a barrier to participation: people in rural areas without transportation, people who work inflexible day jobs, and people with limited mobility.

Maine has long been a leader in voting rights, and our motto *Dirigo* is embodied by our comparatively high voter participation rates, no-excuse absentee voting, and same-day voter registration. However, when it comes to online voter registration, we are woefully behind. In the nearly 20 years since the first state (Arizona) allowed individuals to register to vote online, nearly every state in the country has enacted online voter registration. Maine is one of only nine states that

has not made this tool available.¹ It is time that we remedy this change. Enacting online voter registration will help Maine regain its status as a leader in preserving and strengthening democracy by increasing eligible people's access to the ballot box and ensuring as many people as possible have a voice in the policies of our state. We urge you to vote *ought to pass* on LD 1126.

¹ The other states that have not enacted online voter registration are: Arkansas, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.