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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**LD 941 “An Act To Protect the Privacy of Absentee Voters”**

**Testimony of Shenna Bellows Secretary of State  
Department of the Secretary of State**

*April 7, 2021*

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I am Secretary of State Shenna Bellows. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 941, “An Act To Protect the Privacy of Absentee Voters.”

We agree with the bill’s sponsor that the ability of voters to keep their voting choices to themselves – should they wish to do so – is important. That’s why Maine statute already requires absentee ballots to be folded so that voters’ choices are on the inside of ballots as they’re being processed by our local election workers.

In practice, – and in conjunction with efforts to keep the cost of Maine’s elections from spiraling out of control –the Secretary of State’s office considers multiple factors when determining how the ballots should be printed for maximum ease of use by voters as well as election officials:

1. What size ballot is necessary to cleanly list all applicable races, with readable text (we go no smaller than 9 point font as our smallest font), while making it clear which voting indicators go with which names and also ensuring it can be folded to maintain a voter’s right to a secret ballot? Placement of ballot folds is always considered before we finalize ballot layout.
2. What size return envelope is needed for when the voter mails back or drops off their ballot?
3. What other local ballots or voting instructions will a municipality add to the mailing?
4. What size envelope is needed to get all these items to the voter?
5. And how do we do all of this while taking into account the size and weight limitations on first class mailing?

We strive to strike the right balance on all of these, and we do a good job at it.

Adding an additional envelope in the name of privacy is unnecessary and would be redundant to the work already being done at the state and local levels. An additional envelope could increase the

State's printing costs by 1/3 and increase postage costs for both the municipality to mail out the ballots and the voter who opts to return their ballot by mail.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, and I welcome any questions about our elections policies and practices.