



Testimony in opposition of LD 253

An Act To Strengthen Maine's Election Laws by Requiring Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting

Senator Luchini, Representative Ciazzo and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 253.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to approximately 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$4 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. As a healthcare provider that often works with marginalized populations, we are troubled by the proposals before this committee to introduce a photo ID requirement for voting.

LD 253 would likely lead to the suppression of votes by otherwise eligible voters, disproportionately impacting people already underrepresented in the electorate including Black, Indigenous and People of Color, young people and people struggling financially. A simple examination of the data around who does and does not possess a photo ID underscores the scope of the problem: 11% of US citizens, more than 20 million Americans lack photo identification. This deficit is not spread evenly across various populations, rather a photo ID requirement would only deepen existing inequities-- nationally, up to 25% of African Americans of voting age lack government-issued photo ID, compared to only 8% of whites. Given these facts, it is perhaps unsurprising that a 2014 GAO study showed imposing a strict photo ID requirement would suppress turnout by 2-3%. In real world terms, this means that nearly 25,000 Mainers would have been prevented from exercising their constitutional rights last November.

A photo ID requirement for voting is not just wrong for Maine, but it fundamentally contradicts the aspirations of our democracy. It cuts against what binds us together - the right to vote. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to vote ought not to pass LD 253.