



April 7, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs: my name is Gia Drew, I live in Kennebunkport, and I am here today as Program Director of EqualityMaine.

EqualityMaine was founded in 1984 following the tragic murder of Charlie Howard, a young man who was thrown off a bridge in Bangor just because he was gay. We have been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community for 37 years, and we have more than 70,000 members across the state of Maine.

EqualityMaine opposes LD 253, LD 557, LD 1083, and LD 1099. These bills are unnecessary for numerous reasons, but most specifically because voter ID laws are a form of voter suppression. While voter ID laws disproportionately impact many communities, we'd like to highlight two: transgender individuals and older adults.

A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. Every day, transgender Mainers, myself included, face discrimination, harassment, and bias. We're seen with suspicion, questioned about our identity, and misgendered too frequently. We're ridiculed and made the subject of jokes, sometimes behind our backs, but often to our faces. Those of us who have the means to transition and live as the gender we've always known ourselves to be just want to contribute to society like other Mainers do.

Our identity documents are often a source of difficulty. Presenting identification that does not reflect one's gender identity is a common trigger of harassment of transgender individuals¹. Members of our community have experienced this harassment at every place in which one is required to present identification, from government offices to bars and restaurants. Although EqualityMaine has worked in recent years to simplify the process by which an individual may change their name and gender marker in accordance with their gender identity, many in our community still do not have documentation that reflects who they know themselves to be. About

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2012/12/18/48367/id-accurately-reflecting-ones-gender-identity-is-a-human-right/>

one quarter of transgender Americans who have transitioned (i.e. they have taken steps such as changing their appearance and name to better match their gender identity) lack any identification that accurately reflects their gender². Given the negative experiences these people have from presenting an ID that does not reflect who they are, bills like LD 253, LD 557, LD 1083, and LD 1099 would likely discourage them from voting.

Further, the process of changing one's documentation can be quite burdensome and costly. Transgender individuals must navigate several state and federal agencies to update different documents and they incur a cost at each step - \$30.00 for a new Maine driver's license, \$110.00 for a new passport, and so on. Given that transgender individuals are more likely to live in poverty than the general population³, the costs associated with obtaining new photo identification will disproportionately burden their ability to exercise their right to vote.

Indeed, scholars have assessed the extent to which strict voter identification laws harm transgender Americans. Over a quarter million transgender voters lived in a state that required voter ID and lacked *any* documentation that accurately reflected their gender⁴.

Aside from transgender adults generally, EqualityMaine also advocates on behalf of older LGBT Mainers. SAGE Maine (Service and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) became a program of EqualityMaine at the end of 2019. All 4 of these bills also have significant implications for the older adults in our community.

While about one in ten Americans lack a valid, government-issued ID, this figure rises to one in five adults over 65⁵. Voters born before recording births became common practice may lack a birth certificate, the document commonly used to obtain a driver's license. And as some older adults forgo driving as they age, they may choose not to obtain a new ID. The cost of obtaining new ID also presents a challenge for older adults; some have reported that when they're on a fixed income like Social Security, obtaining a new ID is secondary to more urgent expenses like food and medication⁶.

Older adults already face numerous barriers to voting, such as longer distances to travel to the polls and a lack of accessible polling locations or ballots⁷. We anticipate that LD 253, LD 557, LD 1083, and LD 1099 would compound these factors and would depress the voter turnout of the older LGBT adults on whose behalf EqualityMaine advocates.

² <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/voter-id-laws-costs-trans-voters/>

³ <https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-FINAL.PDF>

⁴ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Voter-ID-Feb-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-01-2012/voter-id-laws-impact-older-americans.html>

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/07/644648955/for-older-voters-getting-the-right-id-can-be-especially-tough>

⁷ <https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Executive%20Summary1.pdf>

I moved back to Maine 15 years ago for many reasons: to enjoy our state's natural beauty, to be part of our vibrant arts community, and to make a difference as an educator. I've decided to call Maine home because I feel safe here and can actively participate in our political process. On behalf of EqualityMaine and our entire community, I ask this committee to reject LD 253, LD 557, LD 1083, and LD 1099.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Gia Drew (she / her)
Program Director
EqualityMaine