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

Testimony Neither For Nor Against

LD 1121 “An Act To Create an Open and Streamlined Primary System”

April 12, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Shenna Bellows, Maine Secretary of State and I’m here to offer testimony neither for nor against L.D. 1121, “An Act To Create an Open and Streamlined Primary System,” which would change the format of many of Maine’s primary elections to open primaries and end the use of ranked-choice voting in general elections.

Given that Maine voters have repeatedly and recently expressed their support for ranked-choice voting at the ballot box, I do have concerns about going against their will.

Should the committee be interested in pursuing this new type of election system, often known as “jungle primaries,” my office would be ready to implement any necessary changes, and we could follow up with the committee before the work session on a list of changes and potential costs to make those changes. These potential costs include new ballot designs, mailing materials, technology and coding changes, public education efforts, and staffing to answer questions from candidates, municipal election officials, the press, and the public.

One place that the proposed legislation could save the State money is in changing the presidential primary to align with the primary election for other federal and state races. We would be happy to provide those figures to the committee ahead of the work session. That said, moving the presidential primary to June could lessen the Maine’s impact on the national race.

I would be happy to answer any questions of the committee, either now or at the work session.