

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Testimony in Support of LD 231, "An Act to Establish Open Primaries"

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am submitting testimony in support of LD 231 as a proud, active member of the Democratic Party.

I worked for Congressman George Miller (D CA) as a legislative aide after graduating from college and was the Deputy Campaign Manager for Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in Maine. I also served on the Barack Obama for President, Maine Finance Committee and the Hillary Clinton for President, Maine Finance Committee. In 2018, I raised money for Jared Golden's election to Congress and campaigned door-to-door on his behalf in CD-2 and for the Maine Democratic Party in Falmouth. In 2016 and 2020, I volunteered to observe the polls on Election Day as a member of the New Hampshire Voter Protection Team.

As evidenced by my involvement in various political campaigns over the last three decades, I strongly believe that democracy works best when more people are encouraged to participate. Maine's closed primary law expressly prohibits 32% of registered voters from voting in primary elections because they are not enrolled in any political party in the State of Maine. While Maine does allow unenrolled voters to enroll in a political party prior to voting in primaries, this multistep process discourages Maine citizens from participating in our electoral process.

This is particularly true with regard to our youngest voters who have less electoral experience as evidenced by the fact that 50% of millennial voters are disenfranchised by Maine's current closed primaries law (statistics provided by the Pew Research Center).

The multistep process is made even more confusing by the lack of consistency among states. Because Maine is one of only 14 states with "members only" elections that limit participation to the primary elections, those voters who may have lived in other states are even more likely to be stymied by our closed primaries system. This inconsistency disproportionately impacts those voters, such as veterans, who have moved frequently. Similar to millennials, 49% of veterans are disenfranchised by Maine's current closed primaries law (statistics provided by the Pew Research Center).

I urge you to vote in support of LD 231 as open primaries would encourage greater participation in our electoral process by allowing unenrolled voters to have their voices heard in all elections.

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