

Rebecca O'Neill
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Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee:

Please accept this testimony in support of L.D. 231, "An Act to Establish Open Primaries."

Maine has a tradition of civic participation, but there is always room for growth.

As a young voter, it's easy to become disenfranchised with our current political system that caters to the two major political parties. Individuals who don't want to be labelled by a political party are currently excluded.

That is why I respectfully ask you to join me -- and 80% of Maine voters -- in supporting semi-open primaries.

Young voters are more affected than any other cohort by Maine's closed primary system. Young voters are eager to participate, but we are also nonpartisan -- 50% of young voters identify as political independents.

But don't mistake this lack of political affiliation for apathy -- young voters are now more engaged in politics than in any other generation before us. According to the Center for Information & Research Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University, 53%-56% of voting-eligible young people, ages 18-29, cast a ballot in the 2020 presidential election. In comparison, in 2016 only 45%-48% of young voters participated in the election.

Young voters are informed and engaged. They should be able to participate in Maine's primary elections.

Thank you for your consideration.

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