



Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Testimony of Joann Bautista Deputy Secretary of State
Department of the Secretary of State
April 21, 2021

Testifying In Support Of
L.D. 1354 "Resolve, To Study The Establishment of a System of Voting By Mail"

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Joann Bautista and I am the Deputy Secretary of State Policy Advisor. I am speaking today in support of L.D. 1354 "Resolve, To Study the Establishment of a System of Voting By Mail," which requests that the Secretary of State's office conduct a study on vote by mail.

Our office has worked with advocates and Senator Miramant to draft an amendment. The Department of the Secretary of State is committed to researching the feasibility of implementing an automatic vote by mail process, analyzing relevant laws and issues, and identifying barriers to implementation in Maine. For clarification, automatic vote by mail would differ from our current system in that it would require the state to automatically send a ballot to all eligible voters, creating another option for eligible voters to cast their ballot.

Currently, approximately 21 states allow some form of vote by mail.¹ Of those 21 states, five states – Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington – conduct *all* their elections by mail. Following the 2020 Presidential Election, Colorado was second in the country for voter participation.² Maine was third in the country³ – but as a leader in election processes and policy, we can do better.

The study will allow us to analyze and review all aspects of automatic vote by mail so that we can be deliberate and thoughtful about considering implementation in our great state.

For the above reasons, we support this bill. I thank you and would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, *VOPP Table 18: States with All-Mail Elections*, Apr. 21, 2020, available at <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-18-states-with-all-mail-elections.aspx>.

² Kevin Duggan, *After 7 Years of Voting by Mail Colorado Voters Aren't Taken In by Absentee Ballot Drama*, Coloradoan, Oct. 1, 2020, <https://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/2020/10/01/colorado-mail-in-ballot-absentee-voting-how-state-perfected-system/3572176001/>.

³ Erin Duffin, *Voter Turnout in U.S. Presidential Election, by State 2020*, Statista, Jan. 7, 2021, available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1184621/presidential-election-voter-turnout-rate-state/>.