

Public Testimony
House Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee
Maine House of Representatives

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My journey to becoming a citizen of the United States is a testament to the values that many of us hold dear, values that are deeply rooted in faith and love for our great nation.

I was born in Brazil, a country with its own unique blend of cultures and traditions. When I was just three years old, my life took a remarkable turn. My mother met an American man who was visiting Brazil on business. They later married.

I grew up in American schools and worked at American companies. I enjoyed a rich life. But there was one thing I couldn't do - vote. That simple act of casting a ballot in the democratic process, a privilege that many often take for granted, wouldn't be afforded to me without my swearing allegiance to the country I loved. It was during this time that I realized the true significance of becoming a U.S. citizen.

At the age of 20, I embarked on the journey to attain my American citizenship. The process was rigorous, demanding my commitment to understanding the history, values, and principles that define this nation. It also demanded my time and money. I will never forget the pride that swelled in my heart as I chose to pledge myself to this incredible country.

At age 21, I celebrated my naturalization with a party surrounded by friends and loved ones. It was a moment of profound joy and gratitude, not just for the right to vote, but for the sense of duty and responsibility that came with it.

My fellow Americans, the citizenship process is a transformative experience. It is a journey of dedication to the ideals that this country was founded upon. It is an affirmation of our commitment to the principles of liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness.

When we advocate for citizen-only voting, we are not merely safeguarding our electoral process; we are nurturing responsible voters—individuals who comprehend the gravity of their choices at the ballot box, who recognize that their decisions have profound consequences for our nation's future. So, let us unite in our conviction that the citizenship process is vital, that it instills in us a deeper sense of responsibility, and that it fosters responsible, informed voters who can be trusted to uphold the values we hold dear.

Non-citizen voting is now legal in our nation's capital and 20 other cities across the country; moreover, efforts to allow non-citizens to vote in Portland, the state's largest city, continue -- even though voters defeated a measure to allow non-citizen voting in 2010. A citizen-only amendment will allow Mainers to decide this fundamental policy, whether only citizens should vote. Let's unite to ensure our democracy remains rooted in citizenship, responsibility, and integrity. Please support LD 175 to give voters the choice.



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