



April 30, 2025

Re: LD 1787

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

Mainers For Modern Elections would like to share our support for LD 1787.

Mainers for Modern Elections is a non-partisan coalition of advocacy groups that believes a functioning democracy requires easy access to the ballot for eligible voters, especially from marginalized voting populations; strong voter protections; and confidence in a secure, modern, representative, and well-resourced elections system. The coalition advocates for statutorily protected voting rights, structural democracy reforms that expand voter access, and investment in and modernization of election administration and implementation. We pursue these policies through direct and grassroots advocacy and by educating and providing resources to public officials and coalition members.

LD 1787 builds upon the largely successful Clean Elections Program. This committee has spent a great deal of time this session reviewing growing concerns about the impacts of dark money, out-of-state funding and international contributions have on Maine elections. Members of both parties have expressed these concerns in this committee. The Maine Clean Elections program is a tool in our toolbox to ensure that Maine's elected officials remain beholden only to their constituents and that serving as an elected official is accessible to those beyond the wealthy.

LD 1787 encompasses 3 policies that expand and shore up this successful program:

- **Expanding Clean Elections to cover District Attorney, Sheriff, and County Commissioner races.** County offices play a major role in law enforcement & emergency planning, distributing federal funds and overseeing multi-million dollar budgets. Voters typically have little engagement with these races, yet we are starting to see examples of outside spending targeting campaigns for DA and sheriff.
- **Raising the contribution limit for seed money for gubernatorial candidates to \$500 per individual donor.** The overall seed money limit would remain the same at \$200,000 for gubernatorial candidates.
- **Increasing the statutory funding for the Clean Elections Fund from \$3 million to \$3.5 million per year.** The increased funding would cover both the full costs of the legislative Clean Elections program and the expansion to county offices.

The Clean Elections program is popular with candidates on both sides of the aisle and with the Maine voters, who continue to demand action to reduce the impact of money on politics. In 2025, the Maine legislature has the opportunity to ensure the Clean Elections program remains strong well into the future and to expand its benefits to more offices.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Members of the Mainers for Modern Elections Coalition include:

ACLU of Maine
AARP of Maine
Center for Secure and Modern Elections
Common Cause
Defend Our Health
Gateway Community Services
League of Women Voters of Maine
Maine AFL-CIO
Maine Citizens for Clean Elections
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Education Association
Maine Equal Justice
Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition
Maine People's Alliance
MSEA-SEIU Local 1989
Maine Women's Lobby
Maine Youth Power
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
Represent Us