



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Opposition to:
LD 38: An Act Requiring Photographic Identification for Voting
LD 397: An Act to Require a Voter to Show Photographic Identification
LD 1149: An Act to Require an Individual to Present Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting**

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
State House, Room 437
Friday, May 2, 2025

Good morning, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individuals and 70 organizational members across the state, and our mission is to advance the health of all people and places in Maine.

MPHA opposes LD 38: "An Act Requiring Photographic Identification for Voting," LD 397: "An Act to Require a Voter to Show Photographic Identification," and LD 1149: "An Act to Require an Individual to Present Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting."

These bills aim to change Maine voting law by requiring voters to provide photo identification. At MPHA, we support making voting accessible, secure, and equitable for all eligible voters in Maine. We believe ensuring that all eligible voters can cast their ballots fairly and equitably is a public health priority, given associations with health status and health outcomes. We are concerned the provisions in these bills will contribute to voter suppression and will limit voting access for eligible voters in Maine. Voter identification laws are indeed considered restrictive and exclusive in the [Cost of Voting Index](#), which refers to the time and effort associated with casting a vote. We also believe there is insufficient evidence that requiring identification improves election security. On the contrary, accessible voting policies do support election integrity.

In 1988, the Institute of Medicine published a landmark report, [The Future of Public Health](#), which acknowledges that voting is a public health issue because it helps shape "the conditions in which people can be healthy." [The American Public Health Association considers voting to be a public health issue](#) because it impacts civic policies ranging from budgets to carrying firearms to insurance and LGBTQ rights. The [Health and Democracy Index](#) analysis also demonstrates that "communities with high voter participation enjoy greater social cohesion and belonging and better health."

[According to Dr. Edward Ehlinger](#), past-president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), voting directly impacts health: "Research conducted in 44 countries showed that civic participation, specifically [voter participation, was associated with better self-reported health](#)—while another study showed that those who did not vote reported poorer health outcomes. Historically, we can see this trend play out via suffrage and voting rights. While other factors were of course at play, it was after women got the right to vote in 1920 that the maternal and infant mortality rates dropped dramatically. This can be attributed to the passage of the Sheppard Towner Act of 1921, which set up maternal and child health units in every state health department, expanded collection of birth and death data, and began federal funding of state health programs.

Similarly, when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, infant mortality rates dropped and the Black/white disparity in those rates narrowed, again because of legislation that was passed in response to new voter enfranchisement.”

Specific to these bills, some individuals may experience barriers to having photo identification, including persons experiencing homelessness, people with low-income, older adults, persons with disabilities, people who oppose having their photo taken due to religious or cultural beliefs, and non-white populations.¹ LD 1149 goes further and also proposes to restrict access to absentee voting, both by reducing the number of absentee ballot boxes and prohibiting absentee ballot requests over the phone.

We respect wanting to ensure election security. However, we believe we can ensure election security while also ensuring all eligible Maine voters are able to cast their ballots fairly and equitably. We believe accessible elections are essential to protecting and promoting public health. Currently, Maine is a national leader in voter accessibility. We are proud of that leadership. We respectfully request you to vote LD 38, LD 397, and LD 1149 “ought not to pass.” Thank you for your consideration.

¹Government Accountability Office (GAO). Issues related to state voter identification laws. September 2014. GAO Report to Congressional Requesters. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-14-634>.