



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

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

Jan Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association

Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

May 2nd, 2025

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

My name is Jan Kosinski, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators, including teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, as well as full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems. Thousands of retired educators continue their connection and advocacy work through the MEA- Retired program.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA in OPPOSITION to 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*.

At their core, all these bills threaten to undermine one of our most sacred civic duties – voting – by erecting unnecessary barriers for eligible citizens, including many of the families and communities our educators serve.

As educators, we teach our students the value of democracy and democratic engagement. It is deeply troubling to consider that a high school student, newly eligible to vote and excited to cast a ballot for the first time, could be turned away or subject to further scrutiny for lacking the right form of identification.

Our concern is not hypothetical. A 2014 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study analyzed voter turnout in Kansas and Tennessee after these states implemented stricter voter ID requirements between the 2008 and 2012 elections and compared these states that did not change their laws. Maine was used as one of the states as a comparison since we had no voter ID changes during this time. The study found that voter turnout decreased by 1.9 to 2.2 percentage points in Kansas and by 2.2 to 3.2 percentage points in Tennessee. Notably, the decline was even more significant among young voters aged 18-23 and

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African American voters. For instance, in Kansas, the estimated falloff among Black voters was nearly 4% greater than among white voters.¹

Maine's schools serve students from families in rural areas, work multiple jobs, or do not have the time or resources to navigate the bureaucracy of obtaining government-issued ID. These bills all proposed another obstacle between these citizens and their right to vote.

We are also worried about the chilling effect these bills could have on civic education. How can we encourage citizens to be active participants in democracy if the state sends the message that voting is a privilege, not a right?

Maine has a long and proud history of secure and accessible elections. In fact, our state consistently ranks among the highest in the nation for voter turnout and election integrity. There has been no evidence of widespread voter fraud in Maine that would justify this legislation. Instead, this bill seeks to solve a problem that does not exist, while creating new burdens to participate in our democracy.

While Maine is often a leader in voter turnout for national and statewide contests, we remain alarmed by the very low participation in other local elections. Maine has local elections happening all the time. School board members can be elected via a town meeting. Voters must approve school budgets. In many cases, the turnout for these elections is paltry at best. For example, last May, voters in Lewiston voted down a school budget – but only a mere 3.9% of voters even participated in that election. The budget was finally passed in July of 2024, and this time only 7.9% of the registered voters in the city cared enough to vote.

I also want to highlight a few of the key provisions of LD 1149 that make this bill even more problematic. Specifically, we are concerned to the provisions of LD 1149 impacting absentee voting, and we are puzzled as to why these provisions were included. Teachers and educators who are working in one district and voting in another need access to secure options for casting their ballot. Eliminating two days of early voting, reducing drop box availability and making it harder to request an absentee ballot will diminish their options creating unnecessary barriers. In addition, MEA has 5,000 retired members who continue their advocacy through MEA. Retired teachers, seniors who are less mobile need access to secure systems that reduce barriers to voting such as ongoing absentee, yet this bill will take that option away from them.

Rather than making it harder for citizens to vote and erecting new barriers to democratic participation, we encourage this Committee to consider a study of any fraudulent voting in recent elections and a study for ways we may be able to maximize participation in all our state's elections, including local elections.

¹ Please see, United States Government Accountability Office, *Elections: Issues Related to State Voter Identification Laws*, Published September 19, 2014, Reissued on February 27, 2015, found here: [Elections: Issues Related to State Voter Identification Laws \[Reissued on February 27, 2015\]](#) | U.S. GAO



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Thank you for your time and your attention and your service to the great state of Maine. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

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