

01 May 2025

To: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

From: Olivia Therrien, Kennebunk Resident

Date of Hearing: 02 May 2025

RE: LD 1446 Testimony **supporting** LD 1446, “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Lower the Voting Age to 16 Years of Age

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Olivia Therrien, and I live in Kennebunk, Maine. I am a 17-year-old senior at Waynflete School in Portland, and I am testifying in strong support of LD 1446, which proposes to amend the Maine Constitution to lower the state voting age to 16.

I would like to voice my **support** of LD 1446 for the following reasons:

Young people deserve a voice in shaping the communities we live in, especially when the decisions being made directly impact our lives. At 16 and 17, many of us are already contributing to our towns and schools—we hold jobs, pay taxes, volunteer, and actively participate in civic life. Yet, we are still excluded from having a say in our communities' governance. We are taxed without representation—a fundamental contradiction to the principles of democracy upon which our nation was founded.

This meaningful change to the Maine Constitution would help students see the real-world power of their vote, especially in local elections that directly affect them. Being able to cast a ballot for school board members, town councilors, and local legislators allows young people to influence decisions about their education, community resources, and future.

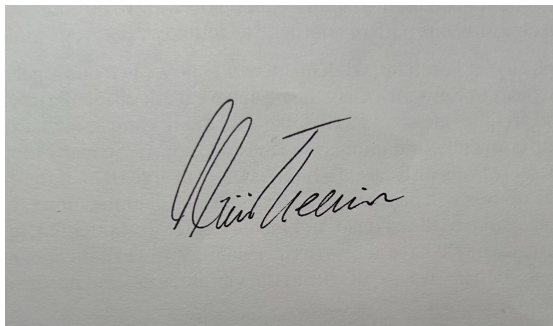
This change would also provide a powerful civic learning opportunity. Allowing students to connect the lessons they learn in government and history classes with real-world voting experience, deepens their understanding of democracy. This early exposure to the electoral process would foster a culture of civic responsibility, helping students grow not only academically but also as informed and engaged citizens.

Lowering the voting age to 16 would create a critical bridge between youth civic education and full federal enfranchisement at age 18. It would allow students to vote for the first time with the guidance and support of teachers, mentors, and peers. Civic education in Maine—and across the country—must be strengthened through direct, hands-on engagement with the electoral process. Research consistently shows that individuals who vote in their first eligible election are far more likely to remain lifelong voters, while those who don't often become disengaged. By starting this process earlier, in a supportive school environment, we can foster lasting civic habits that will benefit both students and society.

At 17 years old, I'm already deeply engaged in civic life—I volunteer during elections, actively participate in my community, and stay informed on local decision-making. I know my peers and I are ready now. We care deeply about our schools, our environment, and our future. We deserve to be part of the process.

I urge the committee to support LD 1446 and take a bold step toward a more inclusive, engaged, and representative democracy. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "Olivia Therrien".

Olivia Therrien
Kennebunk, Maine
Waynflete School
Class of 2025