



May 5, 2021

Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated for public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of Maine women and girls, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities.

We are here today **in support of LD 1575, An Act To Improve Maine's Election Laws**. We thank Representative McCreight for sponsoring this bill.

LD 1575 makes a range of changes that will make elections more equitable, including standardizing voter information, allowing towns to have multiple secure ballot dropboxes, ensuring voters get the opportunity to fix errors on their absentee ballot, making voter registration more accessible for students, and more.

Women are dedicated voters in Maine and across the country, and vote at higher rates than men—Black and brown women even more so. In the 2020 Presidential election, women were 59 percent of the total voters.¹ Yet in many cases, they experience more barriers to the franchise, especially women from marginalized or disenfranchised communities. National data indicate that on average, Black female voters have to wait twice as long to vote as white voters (overall).²

Many of the same barriers that have resulted in women carrying a disproportionate burden during the pandemic (resulting in much higher rates of job loss and unemployment) are the same barriers in accessing voting. **Women are more likely to be care providers in their families, providing the greater share of childcare duties, elder care, or other unpaid care labor. Women are more likely to be in low-wage positions with less flexibility. They are more likely to head single-parent households.** These factors are typically not discussed as part of the traditional barriers to voting, and yet we know that navigating these duties poses very real challenges in the daily lives of Mainers. For those with added barriers - lack of transportation, language or literacy needs, accessibility needs – it becomes that much harder.

Voting is not only a right and a privilege – it is the tool that we use to build the Maine we want to live in. When every eligible Mainer can participate in that building, we are more likely to shape policies and systems that lift up all of our communities and reflect our collective needs and strengths. Participation and engagement in every system improves when we account for the

¹ Washington Post (2020). Exit poll results and analysis from Maine. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/interactive/2020/exit-polls/maine-exit-polls/>

² Stewart, C. (2013). Waiting to Vote in 2012. Journal of Law and Politics. Retrieved August 2, 2020.



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realities of people's lives – their employment structure, work schedules, family duties, accessibility needs, and more. LD 1575 gets us closer to that goal.

We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director
Maine Women's Lobby / mainewomen.org