



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

DATE: March 13, 2023

RE: LD 886 - An Act to Allow Clerks to Issue Absentee Ballots After the 3rd Business Day Before Election Day to Voters Who Have a Nonphysical Disability and Voters Who Support a Person with a Disability

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs.

My name is Will Hayward. I am here today as Advocacy Program Coordinator representing the League of Women Voters of Maine. The League is testifying in favor of LD 886.

Ensuring access to the ballot and promoting voter turnout are fundamental objectives of the League. We support the existing provisions of § 753-B(2)(D) that permit voters who face particular challenges in going to the polls on Election Day to receive an absentee ballot after the 3rd business day before the election, by making a sworn attestation as to the obstacle preventing them from voting in person.

LD 886 proposes to make two modest adjustments to the already approved reasons a voter may obtain an absentee ballot at that time. *First*, it expands subsection (2)(D)(2) to include voters with non-physical, as well as physical disabilities. We strongly believe that all Mainers who face disabilities that pose challenges to voting deserve every opportunity to cast their ballots. *Second*, LD 886 recognizes that informal caregivers, parents, and guardians of persons with disabilities may likewise face unexpected or unusual difficulties in voting that necessitate a request for an absentee ballot in the final days before an election. Supporting access to the ballot for those who play such an important role for Mainers with disabilities is equally important.

We are aware that municipal clerks may have concerns about expanding the grounds on which a voter can seek an absentee ballot in close proximity to an election, perhaps out of concern that some voters may use the provisions of § 753-B(2)(D) as an excuse to promote simple convenience. The legislature has addressed that concern through the attestation requirement. We do not believe that voters would be tempted to falsely claim a disability, or a role as a caregiver for a disabled person, when called upon to sign the attestation. The League believes that the reasons added to the statute by LD 886 are valid and that those required to seek an absentee ballot on that basis should not be prevented from voting.

The League urges you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 886. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.