



TO: The Honorable Louis Luchini
The Honorable Chris Caiazzo, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: April 21, 2021

RE: LD 1276 - An Act To Ensure All Legal Voters Are Able To Participate in Elections

My name is Will Hayward. I'm here today as the Advocacy Program Coordinator for the League of Women Voters of Maine. While we appreciate the spirit in which this bill is brought forward, I am testifying neither for nor against LD 1276 as drafted.

LWVME is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

LWVME works year-in, year-out to protect voter rights and expand access to the ballot and views the use of ballot drop boxes as an important addition to the state's voting infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of ballot drop boxes in the November 2020 election in particular due to the pandemic, LWVME developed a searchable map of these resources across the state. The purpose of this map was to help voters learn whether ballot drop boxes existed in their communities, what they looked like, and where to find them.

Even in less challenging times the use of drop boxes helps people vote who might have schedule conflicts during regular voting hours and who would like to vote without having contact with another person for whatever reason. In addition, being able to hand deliver one's ballot to a secure location can provide voters casting a ballot other than at a traditional polling place confidence that the ballot has been delivered to a secure location in a timely fashion.

To be most helpful in the voting process and to provide voters with confidence in the security of that process, these boxes need to be clearly (and perhaps consistently) labeled, locked and accessible only by the municipal clerk or designees, and emptied regularly to prevent the boxes from becoming too full. These procedures are included in LD 1276.

LD 1276 as drafted, however, limits box locations to a single location at the municipal office building, while LWVME supports making drop boxes available in more than one location where appropriate.

Limiting the number of box locations diminishes access especially in larger municipalities and could result in barriers to ballot access that legislation of this type is intended to reduce.

Although LD 1276 furthers LWVME's goal of making ballot access easier, as drafted it also restricts it unnecessarily. Other, more comprehensive, voting access legislation has been proposed in LD 1363 addressing LWVME's concerns. For these reasons, LWVME's position on this bill is Neither For Nor Against. We understand that proposed amendment language allowing municipalities to have multiple dropboxes has been submitted. Were the committee to adopt this language, we would also support LD 1276.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.