



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

DATE: April 7, 2021

RE: LD 253 - An Act To Strengthen Maine's Election Laws by Requiring Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting
LD 557 - An Act To Require Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting
LD 1083 - An Act To Create a Voter Identification System

My name is Debra McDonough and I am a resident of Scarborough. I'm here today, as a volunteer with the League of Women Voters of Maine, to oppose LDs 253, 557 and 1083.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For 100 years, Leagues here in Maine and across the country have worked to educate and register voters, eliminate obstacles to voting, and make government at all levels more accessible and responsive to citizens. The League supports full voter participation by all eligible American citizens, and we oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizens' constitutional right to vote. At the same time, the League believes that elections should be secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent.

While we must be vigilant to protect against threats to our elections, we must also avoid the impulse to engage in "security theater" — particularly when an ineffective security provision would interfere with the freedom to vote. This Committee regularly hears testimony from the League of Women Voters in support of measures to strengthen election security, and yet, year after year, we oppose photo ID bills like these. We do not believe that photo ID provisions can make our elections more secure, but we do believe that they can interfere with our freedom to vote.

Supporters will tell you that Photo ID provisions are necessary to prevent voter impersonation

at the polls, but we are confident that existing provisions are sufficient to prevent this type of fraud. In fact, a review of relevant studies found it more likely that an American “will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls.”¹

Voter impersonation is rare because it is already hard. In Maine, you would need to identify a registered voter who is unlikely to vote in the election that you would like to compromise. When you check in at the polling place, you’ll announce this false name and address, while standing in front of people who live in the municipality and may well know the voter you’ve chosen to impersonate. The election clerk will then repeat this information “in a loud, clear voice” expressly to ensure that others in the vicinity can hear. The risk of getting caught is relatively high, and the potential reward is always one single vote. Voter impersonation will never be a practical way to steal an election. Someone intent on doing so would have to recruit dozens, if not hundreds of people willing to commit a high-risk felony. At best, photo ID provisions pretend to reduce a threat which has already been addressed.

Unfortunately, Photo ID provisions also introduce a new barrier, and one that only affects the class of voters who do not drive. Individuals who do not already have and carry a driver’s license are asked to make an extra trip — and frequently several — just to get a Photo ID. And don’t forget that they’ll need to do it without driving. You might think of it as a poll tax that must be paid in unnecessary errands.

Every eligible citizen should have the freedom to vote, and we cannot justify making the process more difficult for the sake of “security theater,” particularly when the extra burden falls exclusively on voters who may already be disadvantaged, whether through a disability that prevents them from safely driving or through financial limitations that have prevented them from purchasing a car.

We urge you to protect the freedom to vote for all of our citizens and to avoid erecting this unnecessary barrier. We ask that you Vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 253, LD 557 and LD 1083.

¹ ⁷ *Debunking the Voter Fraud Myth*, The Brennan Center for Justice, January 2017, <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/debunking-voter-fraud-myth>