LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MAINE

TO: The Honorable Senator Joseph Baldacci Co-Chair
The Honorable Ann Matlack Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: Feb 14, 2022

RE: LD 1610 - An Act To Promote Equity in Policy Making by Enhancing the State's Ability To Collect, Analyze and Apply Data

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Good morning Senator Baldacci and Representative Matlack.

My name is Will Hayward. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Advocacy Program Coordinator for the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in support on LD 1610, An Act To Promote Equity in Policy Making by Enhancing the State's Ability To Collect, Analyze and Apply Data.

The League of Women Voters of Maine 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.

The League believes LD 1610 is a critical step towards improving demographic analysis and data sharing in Maine government that builds on the promise of LD 2 which this committee passed last year. As ardent followers and champions of the evidence-based public policy process, we have long observed the challenge captured by the statement "no data, no problem." LD 1610 provides structures to make more of this data available so we can begin to identify the problems, and develop policy solutions to address them.

LD 1610 has several important provisions that many of those testifying today can speak to. The League is particularly encouraged by this bill's push to add additional demographic analysis capacity to state government. Capacity to both conduct demographic analysis and publish demographic data has long been lacking in state government. This bill helps address that. As an office that uses and shares data across state government, the State Economist's Office is particularly well-positioned to benefit from this capacity.

Two areas in which the League has worked that this capacity could support are the Census and redistricting. The 2020 Census provides the basis for much of the data that will guide policy and funding decisions over the next decade, and like the rest of the country, Maine faced significant challenges in public information and outreach during this process. Adding additional capacity now with a charge to focus on demographics and public communications could be a significant step forward to lay the

groundwork for a strong 2030 census. It would also support the many data collection programs that will happen in the intervening years.

A related area this capacity could support is redistricting. In the 2021 redistricting process, the League observed that a very minimal portion of the Apportionment Commission's resources were devoted to public information. This, combined with the shortened timeline, made it nearly impossible for the public to have its voice heard in the process. Demographic analysis and communications capacity in state government will provide an important resource for future commissions to draw on to improve public engagement in redistricting. Citizen and community participation in redistricting is a vital principle, and we hope this capacity will be a step towards improving it in the future.

There are so many other areas of public policy this bill will improve, and we are excited to see all of the ways that improved data can help shape equitable policy. We appreciate the many thoughtful conversations and perspectives that have gone into this bill, and hope it will earn your support.

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