



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

DATE: May 15, 2019

RE: LD 1722 Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State To Develop a Plan for Implementation of Automatic Registration of Nonregistered Persons Qualified To Vote through Records of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Good morning. My name is Ann Luther. I'm a resident of Trenton. I am here today as a volunteer on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine and serve on its Advocacy Committee. I am testifying neither for nor against LD 1722.

The League of Women Voters supports measures that make it easier for eligible people to register to vote thereby increasing participation in our democracy.

We applaud the Secretary of State's interest in modernizing and streamlining the voter registration process through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

However, we believe that another bill before you, LD 1463, is a stronger piece of legislation to institute automatic voter registration in Maine.

LD 1722 only digitizes our current opt-in system for voter registration, which relies on busy people on both sides of the BMV counter taking extra steps to register. LD 1463 changes voter registration to an opt-out system and ensures more people will be registered.

LD 1722 only includes the BMV as a potential source agency, while other agencies that collect information that shows eligibility could be included under LD 1463. This is important to the League because it helps break down barriers to voting for those who face the highest barriers, rather than preserving a privilege gap in voter access that already excludes many eligible voters.

Finally, and most importantly, LD 1722, as a study, leaves the timeline for implementation entirely up to the Secretary of State. LD 1463 provides a generous timeline for implementation - until 2022 - but nonetheless sets statutory parameters for making this change. While we have nothing but respect for the Secretary of State and the staff of the Elections Division who carry out the difficult job of running our elections with the highest professionalism, we still believe it is the duty of this body to set policy on behalf of the voters of Maine.

Automatic Voter Registration will be good for the voters of Maine, and therefore we urge no further delay.