



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

From: Beverly Roxby, Sierra Club Maine

Date: March 18, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 706- RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Lower the Voting Age to 16 Years of Age

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and Members of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Bev Roxby, and I am writing as a mother, a civic activist, and a retired public school teacher. Additionally, I write as a representative of Sierra Club Maine's over 20,000 members and supporters. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as work to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. Particularly in recent years, the scope of that mission has included supporting reforms that improve the fairness and efficacy of our democratic process. It is in that spirit that I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 706.

In my 30+ years of teaching I've witnessed the value of civics education among students as they learn about the origins, functions, and decision-making processes of our government. I'm deeply concerned that this civic knowledge is getting lost as too many voters decide elections based on highly emotionally charged influences.

Sixteen and seventeen year-olds are critical stakeholders and are ready to vote. Many have jobs, some without hourly limits; they pay taxes and drive. In some cases they are tried as adults in our court system. They are given the responsibilities of adults. Sixteen year olds are mature enough to draw upon their logical reasoning abilities, as much as their 18-year old counterparts.

Furthermore, in places where the voting age has been lowered, 16-year olds vote at higher rates than older first-time voters, and the more people who vote the more they are likely to continue voting. Studies comparing qualities such as civic knowledge, political skills and political interest have found no significant differences between 16-year olds and those above age 18.

Finally, students today have begun to raise their voices on matters such as climate justice and racial justice. Clearly, they recognize the importance of voting. These times have had a sobering effect on many teens today, and young people are the constituents of their future.

Sierra Club Maine honors the work being done by student groups like Maine Youth for Climate Justice and supports passage of this legislation.

We urge you to vote ought-to-pass on L.D. 706.

Respectfully,

Bev Roxby
Executive Committee
Sierra Club Maine