



TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman  
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: April 12, 2023

RE: LD 1327 - An Act to Limit the Requirements Regarding Leadership Political Action  
Committees and to Promote Clean Election Transparency

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Good afternoon, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is Paul Lavin. I am a resident of Winthrop. I am here today as a volunteer on behalf of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections to testify in opposition to LD 1327.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections and campaign finance laws that serve the public interest. We are proud of our national reputation. But we are all Mainers, and our nonpartisan mission has always been with and for the people of this State.

In 2021, Maine joined 23 other states<sup>1</sup> and the federal government to prohibit candidates from receiving contributions from corporations and other entities when the 130th Legislature enacted LD 1417. That bill, which just went into effect this year on January 1st, made significant positive reforms to Maine's campaign finance regulations to improve public confidence that Maine's elected officials would not be influenced by big money special interests. This bill seeks to reverse one of the most critical reforms and would undermine public trust in the Legislature.

LD 1327 would allow legislators to receive unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations and other interest groups, including dark money 501(c)(4) organizations that do not disclose their funding. I think this bears repeating. This bill would allow a legislator to set up a political action committee and take in unrestricted and unlimited amounts of money while the Legislative is in session.<sup>2</sup> Recent discussions in this Committee have noted the illogic of having contribution limits for candidates running for office and then letting them raise unlimited and unrestricted contributions once they've

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

<sup>2</sup> There are certain limited restrictions on lobbyists, lobbying firms and lobbyist employers contributing their own funds to a legislator-led PAC while the Legislature is in session. 1 M.R.S.A. § 1015(2).

been elected. In politics and governing, perception makes all the difference. When legislators can accept unlimited amounts of money, the public will perceive them to be selling access and influence to the highest bidder.

The current law was enacted to improve and preserve public trust in Maine's citizen legislature by placing reasonable restrictions on contributions to legislator-led political action committees. These PACs may accept contributions from individuals up to the limit set for legislative candidates but may not receive contributions from business entities, including corporations and labor organizations.

The second part of the bill would require Clean Election candidates to report, in their seed money report, detailed information about registered voters in their districts who made qualifying contributions (QCs). This additional reporting requirement is misplaced and unnecessary. QCs are not contributions to the candidate. They are donations to the Maine Clean Election Fund. Campaign finance reports track money that goes into and out of the candidate's campaign account. QCs have no place in those reports. The bill also requires candidates to report occupation and employment information even though individuals are not required to provide that information to candidates as they collect QCs. Moreover, privately financed candidates are not required to report that information for their contributors giving \$50 or less.

The policy on legislator-led PACs embodied in this bill is not in the public interest and ultimately not in the interest of the Legislature as it would erode the public's trust in this institution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1327. I would be glad to answer any questions the Committee may have.