



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

DATE: Wednesday, April 26, 2023

RE: LD 1627 An Act to Improve Disclosure of Lobbyist Activities

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica and honorable members of the Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs.

My name is Anna Kellar. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. I am testifying neither for nor against LD 1627.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections are strong supporters of transparency in the political process, including timely public disclosure of lobbying contracts and activities. Who is trying to spend money to influence our democracy? Legislators and the public have the right to know. We applaud Senator Bennett's efforts to improve reporting on lobbying activities.

We support Section 1 of the bill, requiring professional lobbyists to file timely reports of new contracts, disclosing their employment agreements.

However, we have questions and reservations about Sections 2 and 3. Currently, lobbyist disclosure is required at the end of the month when a lobbyist crosses the threshold of eight hours of lobbying during a calendar month. How would this work under a weekly reporting scheme? Presumably, the lobbyist would be required to file at the end of the first week when the 8-hour threshold is achieved – which would be OK – and every week for the rest of that month – maybe not so much OK?

Here are our reservations with that: namely, that increasing the frequency of lobbyist reporting under the existing regime amounts to increasing the administrative burden on both the regulating agency and the regulated community without necessarily improving the quality of information that is available to interested parties.

The 8-hour rule means that only the tip of the iceberg is disclosed. A vast amount of compensated legislative and executive branch advocacy occurs outside what is required to be

reported. At the same time, what is reported is not meaningfully available from the Ethics Commissions database, which is increasingly deadlocked in antiquated and inflexible technology.

We would encourage the committee to look holistically at the systems of lobbyist reporting and assess what is currently working and what can be improved.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.