



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

DATE: Wednesday, May 3, 2023

RE: LD 1811 An Act to Clarify Required Political Committees 24-hour Reports

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica.

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 in opposition to LD 1811.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over thirty years and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections.

LD 1811 would remove important limitations on the influence of money in elections and make it harder for voters to understand who is funding campaigns in the last days before an election.

This bill makes a drastic change to Maine laws, increasing the limit on contributions from PACs, party committees, and other non-individual sources from \$500 to a whopping \$25,000. This would increase the influence of PACs and party committees at the expense of voters, and further concentrate power in entities such as caucus PACs and leadership PACs. Remember that in Maine, there are no contribution limits to most PACs and party committees. This change alone hands control of candidate campaigns over to mega donors and political insiders at the expense of ordinary voters.

In 1996, Maine voters supported lowering legislative candidate contribution limits from \$5,000 for parties and corporations and \$1,000 for individuals to \$250 for all entities. Contribution limits help to ensure that no one group or individual has an outsized influence on our elected officials and that candidates must develop a wide base of support among their constituents. Such an enormous change would go against the will of Maine voters and the spirit of our campaign finance laws.

We also oppose the complete elimination of the 24-hour reporting requirement that this bill proposes for all campaigns other than referendums. Timely disclosure in the last phase of a campaign is of value to the voters and especially to the media who cover these developments.

This committee has heard a number of bills this session proposing to either strengthen or weaken the reporting requirements for candidates, PACs, and lobbyists. While we are strong believers in the value of

transparency and disclosure for our democracy, there are clearly a variety of perspectives on the appropriate mechanisms and timing for this disclosure. Disclosure laws should maximize the benefit to voters, while not adding unnecessary burdens to campaigns. We would support efforts for a more comprehensive examination of these laws to ensure that the statutes are keeping up with modern campaign practices and best serving the interests of Maine voters. But we can't support this wholesale elimination of important measures that support the public interest.

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