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Testimony of Representative Nicole Grohoski
LD 1995: Neither for Nor Against
Before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

7 March 2022

Greetings Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and honorable members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Secretary of State's budget contained in LD 1995, *An Act To Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and To Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2022 and June 30, 2023*.

I encourage this committee to include LD 1155, *An Act To Require Election Transparency and Audits*, into the supplemental budget for the Department of the Secretary of State, in addition to the two other appropriations for this Department you have heard about this morning. Thus far, the Legislature has been very supportive of this bill, passing it in the House under the hammer and in the Senate with a vote of 32 to 0.

Public confidence in our elections is of the utmost importance and must be earned, not taken for granted. I personally have great confidence in the election process in Maine because I have worked full days at the polls, hand-counted ballots, observed recounts, and done a great deal of research into our systems in order to answer my own and my constituents' questions. It is to our credit that here in Maine we have paper ballots and a robust chain of custody and security system to protect them. Our clerks and their staff take their work very seriously and I am grateful to them for the long days and nights they put in to ensure our elections are successful.

Not all citizens are as aware of how an election works, how they can get involved, and what to do if they have questions or concerns. Thus, LD 1155 includes components designed to improve citizen understanding of election procedures as well as the process for collecting and using public

feedback about elections in Maine. It is important that the State provide easily accessible and understandable information to citizens who may hear conflicting information about our elections or wonder just how exactly we do things here in Maine, compared to other states.

It is also critical that the State pilot and prepare for post-election audits that limit the risk of inaccurately certifying an election. Routine audits of any system are important to ensuring it works as designed, identifying opportunities for improvement, and detecting any abnormalities. Post-election audits are a critical tool, allowing election officials to identify and correct tabulation errors, whether those errors are introduced by a malicious actor or by inadvertent human or technical error. I'm not suggesting that there is something concerning in particular to rout out, I'm just a big believer in gathering baseline data and making iterative improvements to systems, and elections are no exception!

Maine has always been a leader in election practice, but as one of only 6 states with no audit provision, we're behind the curve on this. Three states (CO, RI, VA) already mandate newer risk-limiting audit methods, with another seven states moving in this direction. It is time for Maine to join them. Because a robust post-election audit requires more than a visual examination of paper ballots, this bill also introduces procedures to audit the election process, including a system of citizen oversight to ensure that elections throughout the state are conducted uniformly and in accordance with state law.

Our democratic republic rests on both the accuracy of our elections and public confidence in our election results. LD 1155 includes provisions to identify and correct any tabulation errors as well as provisions to enhance transparency. To strengthen and protect our elections here in Maine, we need to invest appropriate resources by including LD 1155 in the supplemental budget.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony, and would be happy to answer any questions.