**The Maine Heritage Policy Center**

**Testimony to Oppose LD 1868**

**“An Act To Improve the Reporting of Grassroots Lobbying”**

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to a portion of LD 1868.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center generally agrees with the premise of this bill. It reduces the threshold for reporting grassroots lobbying expenditures from anything that exceeds $15,000 to anything more than $2,000 in a calendar month. This bill would undoubtedly bring more transparency to Maine’s lobbying reports and give the public a greater sense of how groups are able to mobilize their members and supporters. However, there is language in the bill that would make the state’s reporting requirements less transparent.

The last two lines in Section 1 of the bill exclude some of the most powerful lobbying organizations in the state from having to report their grassroots lobbying efforts when it involves communicating with their members. It says, ””Grassroots lobbying” does not include a person communicating with the person's stockholders, employees, board members, officers or dues-paying members.”

According to data disclosed to the US Department of Labor, the Maine Education Association (MEA) has nearly 23,500 members, the Maine State Employees Association (MSEA) has more than 8,000 members and labor organizations as a whole have approximately 74,000 members.[[1]](#footnote-0) These organizations are well-equipped to communicate and use their members for the purpose of influencing legislation.

Despite this, LD 1868 would allow labor organizations and other groups with dues-paying members to communicate with their members for the purpose of lobbying the legislature without having to disclose how much they spend on those efforts. However, most other groups who mobilize their supporters would be required to report their expenditures if they spend more than $2,000 on independent contractors and other vendors to purchase goods and services such as advertising, graphic or website design, video or audio production services, telecommunications services, printing and postage.

All groups who mobilize their members or supporters have the same goal in mind — to influence pending legislation. The state should not treat communications to a person’s stockholders, employees, board members, officers or dues-paying members any differently than communications to members of the public who support organizations that are not exempt from this legislation. This is about fairness and transparency for all.

To be clear, The Maine Heritage Policy Center wants to work with lawmakers to improve transparency, especially regarding reporting requirements. Nonetheless, the changes put forward in this legislation would need to be applicable to everyone in order to earn our support.

1. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t05.htm>; <https://olms.dol-esa.gov/olpdr/> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)