

The Maine Heritage Policy Center

Testimony to Support LD 294

“An Act To Require the Fiscal Impact Estimate of a Direct Initiative of Legislation To Be Included on the Ballot”

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck, and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as the policy analyst for The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in full support of LD 294, “An Act To Require the Fiscal Impact Estimate of a Direct Initiative of Legislation To Be Included on the Ballot.”

In 2017, Mainers passed Question 2 that read, “Do you want Maine to expand Medicaid to provide healthcare coverage for qualified adults under age 65 with incomes at or below 138% of the federal poverty level, which in 2017 means \$16,643 for a single person and \$22,412 for a family of two?” Any reasonable person who only read the question would have believed it was going to help Mainers in poverty get ahead by providing them healthcare. If a fiscal impact estimate were provided, it would have shown that Medicaid expansion would cost approximately \$54.5 million annually, according to estimates developed by the Office of Fiscal and Program Review. We wonder what the outcome would have been had Maine voters known the price tag in advance of casting their vote.

When the public was recently polled about their support or opposition to a Medicare for All plan, 56 percent said they would support the plan and 42 percent opposed it. When more information was given about the tax burden that would be incurred by most Americans as a result of implementation, the percentage in favor of Medicare for All decreased to 37 percent.¹ While we acknowledge that this poll offers anecdotal evidence, it does reflect how individuals react when information about the fiscal impact of a measure is provided. The difference in opinion reflects the power of transparency, especially when the general public is the deciding factor in lawmaking through ballot initiatives.

In addition, other states have taken steps to provide similar levels of transparency to voters at the ballot box. Some provide digests and summaries, others print fiscal notes in newspapers, voter pamphlets and on the ballot to ensure proposed measures are transparent enough to make educated decisions about them.² The Maine Heritage Policy Center believes our state can do

¹ <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-january-2019/>

² <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/fiscal-impact-statements.aspx>

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more than simply publish this information in the Citizen's Guide to the Referendum Election; it should be printed on every ballot so that Mainers know the impact of an initiative while casting their vote. We also believe that printing summaries of fiscal impact statements directly on the ballot would be the most transparent method of providing this information.

Critics of this bill will likely cite the cost of printing additional ballot pages as a downside to this proposal. However, we are most concerned with ensuring that there is a summary denoting the net cost or savings to the state. This information should only require a line or two of additional text on the ballot per question, or could be included in the question itself, eliminating the costs for printing an entire fiscal impact statement.

To that end, we urge the committee to support LD 294. Thank you.