

## **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.”

For far too long, special interest groups have had the pleasure of going to major cities in our state to collect signatures for costly ballot initiatives that hurt Mainers. 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 that 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 \$400 million over five years.<sup>1</sup> We wonder if Maine voters would have rejected this initiative if they saw the price tag on the ballot.

When the public was 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 to most Americans, the percentage in-favor of Medicare for All decreased to 37 percent.<sup>2</sup> While we acknowledge that this poll was not done at the state-level, it does reflect how individuals react when information about the fiscal impact of a measure is given. This data reflects the power of transparency, especially when the general public is the deciding factor in lawmaking through ballot initiatives.

Additionally, other states have taken steps to provide fiscal impact statements to voters. Some provide digests, summaries, and fiscal notes in newspapers, voter pamphlets, and on the ballot to ensure proposed measures are transparent enough to make educated decisions on them.<sup>3</sup> The Maine Heritage Policy Center believes our state can do better than simply publishing 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 believe

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mainepolicy.org/project/medicaidexpansion/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-january-2019/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/fiscal-impact-statements.aspx>

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having this information on the ballot would be the most transparent way of providing this information to the voter because it would give them a more complete picture of the impact of the measure.

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 an estimate denoting the net cost or savings to the state. This information should only require a few lines of texts on the ballot or could be included in the question itself, eliminating the need and cost for additional pages.

To that end, I urge the committee to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you.