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**Testimony of Senator Eric Brakey
Presenting L.D. 769, An Act to Reduce the Enrollment
Requirement for Minor Political Parties that Seek Official Party Status
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
March 15, 2023**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs: I am Senator Eric Brakey, representing the people of Auburn, New Gloucester, Poland, and Durham. Thank you for your presence today as I present L.D. 769, *An Act to Reduce the Enrollment Requirement for Minor Political Parties that Seek Official Party Status*.

Biodiversity is important, not only for a healthy world, but also for a healthy political ecosystem.

In a system dominated by only two political parties, both become reflections of each other. Small policy differences are made to appear larger than they are to provide differentiation to voters. At the same time, our system maintains blind spots to major questions of the day — in which unspoken agreements exist between major party establishments — over matters as weighty as war, environmental pollution, central banking, and national bankruptcy. A healthy political ecosystem must maintain space for third parties. They remind us there are more than two sides to any issue, putting forward perspectives that established orders would often rather ignore even to detriment of society.

Maine especially, among the states of our union, consistently demonstrates the value for third ways. Over 26% of Maine voters are currently unenrolled, preferring not to sign on with either major party. Maine people want options, and yet only one third party, the Green-Independent Party, has managed to maintain the high thresholds for ballot access and party recognition in the state of Maine.

Especially as our state experiments with new systems of voting in our general elections (including Ranked Choice Voting and legislation I will present later this session for multi-party fusion tickets), what is the point in building systems for more options when those options do not expand?

That is why, at the request of the Libertarian Party of Maine, I am presenting LD 769 for consideration to this committee, which would simply reduce from 10,000 to 5,000 the minimum number of voters required to be enrolled in a party for that party to qualify to participate in an election.

Under current thresholds, established parties only have to sign a piece of paper to get their candidate on the ballot for President. Meanwhile, minor parties spend upwards of \$100,000 and countless hours just for ballot access. This bill corrects that imbalance, and promotes a healthier political biodiversity for Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.