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***Testimony of Sen. Eloise Vitelli regarding
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
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
March 10, 2022***

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Eloise Vitelli and I represent Senate District 23, which includes all of Sagadahoc County and the town of Dresden in Lincoln County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 1995 as it relates to funding of the Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices.

The Maine Ethics Commission executes critical work to ensure that our elections are free from corruption and undue influence, that Maine's campaign laws are followed, that Maine's Clean Election Fund is administered properly, and so much more. Maine's tradition of strong voter participation and free and fair elections is due in no small part to the Commission's important work.

In order to carry out their mission effectively, the Commission is asking for some additional funding as part of the supplemental budget currently before this committee, as laid out by Jonathan Wayne, Executive Director of the Commission, in his testimony on March 7. The first request allows for the reorganization of their administrative assistant position into a secretary specialist position. The second request encompasses increased General Fund funding to cover existing administrative costs and personnel services that are currently being funded through the Maine Clean Election Fund. As Director Wayne explains in his testimony, this is not an appropriate way to fund the Commission's work, and this increased General Fund appropriation would fix a long-term issue with their budget.

The Commission serves Maine people by ensuring that our election system and our government act ethically, but they can only do this if they're adequately and appropriately funded. I urge you to fulfill their requests, and I appreciate your consideration of this request and of the supplemental budget as a whole.