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Testimony of Jeremy Gruber, SVP of Open Primaries
House Election Law Committee
January 27, 2026
HB 1627– Single Primary Ballot

Chairman Berry and Members of the Election Law Committee,

My name is Jeremy Gruber and I am the Senior Vice President of Open Primaries-a nonpartisan non-profit organization dedicated to more open and inclusive election systems. I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB 1627. I strongly believe this bill would strengthen democratic elections, broaden voter participation, and improve the quality of representation in New Hampshire.

1) HB 1627 better reflects the will of the state’s electorate and their preferences.

There are 375,000 registered independents in New Hampshire. Independents are the largest group of voters in the state now, accounting for close to 40% of all registered voters. Those numbers reflect national trends where just last week, Gallup announced 45% of the electorate identify as independent. Even beyond those numbers, New Hampshire voters have justifiably earned the reputation of being fiercely independent going all the way back to the founding of the Republic.

Yet there’s nothing independent about New Hampshire’s primary election system. Indeed, the first round of the state’s elections is similar to that of many states that use a partisan system. Republican and Democratic Party registered voters must stay in their lanes and are limited to choosing from the candidates that the party they are registered with puts forth. Independents can participate, and that’s important, but they are restricted to the same limitations once they choose a ballot line.

That means New Hampshire voters do not get to choose the best candidates to move forward to the general election. They get to choose the best candidates from within the ballot line they are restricted to. Primary elections in the state of New Hampshire are taxpayer-funded and publicly administered, yet they are artificially restricted to the ballot lines of private organizations that a majority of voters do not even belong to.

It doesn't have to be that way. A number of states, inc. Alaska, California, Nebraska and Washington have dispensed with party ballot lines and instituted a nonpartisan ballot like the one envisioned in HB 1627. All voters participate on equal terms and all candidates are presented on equal terms. The candidates with the most voters proceed to the general election.

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You have all likely already voted in such an election. Most cities in New Hampshire, including Manchester, use nonpartisan ballots. So do 85% of US cities across the country. As OKC Mayor David Holt (R), the President of the US Conference of Mayors, has stated:

“In open elections like those in Oklahoma City, we create a dynamic where every candidate and every voter are on equal terms. That approach yields consensus results that push a community forward, because we see each other as complex humans, not ideologues, and we can work across artificial divisions. Open systems foster collaboration and bridge building in the service of finding solutions. Closed systems foster zero-sum game competition and partisan rivalry.”

Our own national polling has found that 70% of independent voters support and prefer a single nonpartisan primary ballot.

2) HB 1627 will increase voter engagement and turnout.

Research shows that nonpartisan primaries tend to *increase voter turnout* compared to traditional partisan primaries. States that have implemented nonpartisan systems consistently see higher participation in primaries because all voters are included and feel their vote matters. Higher turnout strengthens the legitimacy of our elections and encourages broader civic engagement across demographic lines. Instead of primaries being dominated by a small, highly partisan subset of voters, nonpartisan primaries draw a broader cross-section of the population—young voters, independents, moderates, and first-time participants. This leads to election outcomes that more accurately reflect public sentiment rather than the preferences of the most politically extreme or organized factions.

Higher turnout also strengthens public trust in elections. When more people participate, the results carry greater legitimacy, and voters are more likely to feel that elected officials truly represent the community as a whole. At a time when confidence in democratic institutions is under strain nationwide, reforms that expand participation and inclusion are not just desirable, they are essential.

3) HB 1627 will restore competition and accountability.

How primary elections are structured increasingly matters, because general election races in New Hampshire and across the country are becoming more and more uncompetitive. It's the state's primary elections where the real choices and real opportunities to have a meaningful impact exist.

That means that the voters who currently turn out for partisan primaries—often a narrow slice of the electorate—have disproportionate influence over who will represent the state for every elected

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office. A single primary ballot system would help shift the focus back to the broader electorate, making the nomination process itself more competitive and more reflective of general election dynamics.

By ensuring that *all voters*- not just the most active or most partisan- have a voice in selecting candidates who will compete in general elections, nonpartisan primaries can help restore competitiveness and accountability across the electoral cycle.

That's the key to the single primary ballot system; empowering voters and elected leaders to work together by removing the structures that keep them apart. Common-sense decision-making is in short supply in so many other parts of our country, but it's at the heart of New Hampshire's political culture. A single primary ballot system would greatly enhance that. As former State Senator Colby Coash from Nebraska who was elected in such a system stated:

“When you're successful in winning an election where you've had to court all voters-you become a better legislator.”

Conclusion:

New Hampshire has a proud tradition of prioritizing citizen participation and engagement in government. A single primary ballot enhances that tradition by embracing all voters equally, not just those affiliated with a party. It continues the spirit of inclusion that makes New Hampshire's elections uniquely responsive and vibrant. That's why HB1627 is such an important bill.

Switching to a single primary system is not about diminishing political parties. It is about expanding democratic participation, enhancing representation, and making elections more reflective of the diverse views of Granite Staters. I hope you will lend your support to it.

Thank you again and I'm happy to serve as a resource to the legislature as you debate this important bill.

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