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Proponent Testimony on HB 2576
House Elections Committee

Chairman Proctor and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2576. This hearing has been a long time in the making, as I introduced this legislation back in 2021. The bill stems from when I first filed for office, that nervous and exciting time when all I could think was, “Am I really going to do this?” The arrival of letter from the Governmental Ethics Commission with the “Statement of Fair Campaign Practices” inside was confirmation that, indeed, I was really going to do this. As I am committed to truth, honor, and fair practices, so read and re-read it and signed it enthusiastically...then re-read the letter and stopped on the words saying it was optional and that there was no enforcement mechanism. I agree with it being optional, but what’s the point, at all, without any enforcement mechanism?

The bill requires an update of the statements to include a pledge not to use synthetic media in unfair manners and publication of signed statements on the Commission’s website, searchable by name, so voters can determine if candidates on their ballot have committed to run fair campaigns or not. Most importantly, it creates a cause of action -an enforcement mechanism- which responsive to the unique nature of election cycles, for candidates who violate the statements that they have voluntarily agreed to abide by.

The bill is based on legislation in other states that passed in bipartisan manners, particularly New Hampshire’s law. The “WHEREAS” section is an anthem outlining the need for the bill. I firmly believe that creating consequences for candidates who use “materially false statements” and violate fair practices to which they have agreed will improve the quality of information voters use to make decisions. It will also be telling when candidates choose **not** to sign the statements and helpful for voters to be able to easily determine which candidates do not.

Committee, I thank you for your time and welcome your questions.

Mari Lynn Poskin