



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
From: Philip Mathieu, Sierra Club Maine
Date: February 3, 2021
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 65 An Act To Invest in the Stewardship and Management of Properties Acquired with the Proceeds from the Land for Maine's Future Fund or the Public Access to Maine Waters Fund**

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, thank you for allowing me to present our testimony to you. My name is Philip Mathieu, and I am here today as a representative of Sierra Club Maine's more than 20,000 members and supporters. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as work to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet and we strongly support LD #65 in pursuit of that mission. Today, I am pleased to represent our members in urging this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD# 65.

In addition to being a representative of Sierra Club Maine, I come to you today as a conservation professional who has had the privilege of stewarding lands acquired with assistance from the Land for Maine's Future Fund. While the lands that I work with account for just a fraction of the over 600,000 acres protected by LMF, they grant me a window into both the value of the existing program and the merit of the changes presented in this bill.

LD# 65 represents a common-sense reform that will enhance the ability of the LMF program to maximize the long-term value of conserved properties. The current LMF program currently places the full burden of stewardship and management of funded projects on either the state government or a partnering entity. These costs can be significant, particularly for smaller land trusts or municipalities that have limited operational funding.

By permitting a small portion of funding to be dedicated towards these tasks, LD# 65 will improve the viability of LMF projects with significant stewardship or management needs. Doing so would in effect expand the range of viable partner

organizations, help to leverage funding from other, less flexible sources, and ensure that requirements of project agreements are met. This change shifts the focus from protecting properties in the moment to ensuring that those properties remain valuable ecological and cultural resources for the people of Maine long into the future.

Land for Maine's Future is a vital funding source for conservation in Maine. This bill will only enhance the program by reducing the barrier of stewardship and management costs to project viability. On behalf of Sierra Club Maine, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD# 65.