Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Support of LD 1737

"An Act to Ensure the Future of Maine's Sporting Camp Heritage"

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Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I'm Krysta West of Readfield and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council in support of LD 1737, "An Act to Ensure the Future of Maine's Sporting Camp Heritage." The Council supports this bill because it is critical to preserving the historical and economic significance of Maine's remote sporting camps.

For 65 years, the Maine Forest Products Council has served as the voice of Maine's forest economy, representing more than 300 members from all facets of the forest products industry. Our members include pulp and paper mills, sawmills, secondary wood processors, foresters, loggers, and truckers. We also represent commercial landowners managing more than 8 million acres of forestland. While supplying much of the fiber to sustainably support an $8.1 billion forest products industry, our members also provide public access to these privately owned and managed forests that support Maine's $2.8 billion outdoor recreation industry.

From a landowner perspective, nobody wants to have issues that can cause significant environmental impacts, such as a failing septic system. Like the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), our members are committed to preserving water quality at remote sporting camp locations and ensuring visitor safety. However, we support LD 1737 not because we favor lax regulations, but because we recognize the fundamental differences between a Portland hotel and a remote commercial sporting camp. These differences—both in client expectations and logistical constraints—require practical, tailored approaches to permitting decisions.

Landowners are deeply supportive of sporting camps and have a vested interest in their success. These camps are not only historically significant but also vital to Maine's recreational management. The vast North Maine Woods attracts visitors for a wide range of activities, from hunting and fishing to hiking and wildlife viewing. Sporting camps provide essential lodging for these visitors, supporting the broader outdoor recreation economy. Without them, many recreational opportunities in Maine's remote forests would be inaccessible.

LD 1737 acknowledges the unique challenges faced by sporting camps. The cost and logistical difficulty of upgrading systems to meet DHHS's standards in remote, and sometimes off grid, can be prohibitive. For camp owners approaching retirement, these costs can make it nearly impossible to find buyers, threatening the survival of these cherished facilities, even if the existing systems function properly.

Maine's sporting camps are a cornerstone of our state's heritage and economy. Practical considerations must be made to preserve this historic infrastructure. LD 1737 strikes a balanced approach, ensuring environmental protection while supporting the long-term viability of these iconic destinations. We respectfully urge your support for LD 1737 to safeguard the future of Maine's sporting camp heritage. Thank you for your time and consideration.