



April 11, 2017

**AOPA Testimony Opposing Maine LD 1149
Joint Committee on Transportation**

Chairman Collins, Chairman McLean and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee,

The Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation organization representing the general aviation interests of more than 350,000 members across the country, including more than 1,500 in the State of Maine. On behalf of these members, **AOPA opposes LD 1149 due to the increase to excise taxes on aviation gasoline.**

LD 1149 proposes a 7 cent increase on fuels used by "internal combustion engines", and stipulates that only Jet fuel will remain unchanged from the current tax rate. The tax on aviation gasoline would thereby increase by default. While AOPA may generally agree with the need for additional infrastructure funding for airports, we do not believe the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) annual funding allocations will produce a tangible benefit for most of Maine's 72 public-use airports. From our research we have learned that excise taxes on aviation fuels are dedicated to Maine DOT's airports program in the following manner:

- a. Contract fulfillment of Augusta State (AUG) Airport with City of Augusta.
- b. Upkeep of the Deblois Airfield.
- c. Department travel & equipment (airport program).
- d. Salaries of airports program staff (2.5).

In fact, there is no defined program for the use of aviation fuel excise taxes to be used toward aviation infrastructure beyond the two state-owned airports. As LD 1149 appears to target the highway infrastructure system, it should be noted that by federal mandate, all revenues generated by taxes on aviation fuels must be expended for the local airport or state system of airports per *Title 49, USC Subtitle VII, Aviation Programs; Airport Sponsor Assurances – Airport Revenues (#25)*.

Finally, the average pilot of a light general aviation aircraft pays excise tax at a rate of 5 to 7 times more per unit of time than the average automobile traveling on a highway. For this reason, combined with the obligation to dedicate revenues from taxes on aviation fuels back to airports, we request the Committee delink aviation fuels from other fuels used in internal combustion engines for purposes of taxation. Until such time that the legislature can independently review the infrastructure needs of Maine's system of airports, AOPA opposes any proposal to increase excise taxes on aviation fuels.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. AOPA is committed to ensuring the safety, future viability, and development of general aviation as an integral part of a national transportation system. We welcome any opportunity to serve this Committee and the Legislature as a resource on all matters impacting general aviation. Please contact Eastern Regional Manager Sean Collins with any questions or concerns at sean.collins@aopa.org or by phone at (301) 695-2090.