



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture Conservation and Forestry  
From: Becky Bartovics, Sierra Club Maine  
Date: January 25, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 56: An Act To Provide Free Admission To State Parks And Historic Sites For The Spouses And Children Of Veterans Holding Free Day Use Passes**

Chairs, Senator Ingwersen and Representative Pluecker, and Members of ACF, my name is Becky Bartovics, and I am speaking as a volunteer with Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. 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 and supporters nation-wide, and we urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 56.

Sierra Club has a long standing effort to provide Veterans and their families access to the restorative qualities provided by access to the natural world. Veterans and their families deserve access to our public lands that they have served in our military to protect. "Sierra Club's Military Outdoors (SCMO) ensures military members, veterans, and their families enjoy the beauty of nature by supporting programs and policies that remove barriers preventing them from experiencing the great outdoors"<sup>1</sup>. In fact, the first Sierra Club outing at Katahdin Woods and Waters just after it was designated a National Monument was organized by the SCMO program. Currently, Maine Parks Fees structure allows Disabled Vets and families free access. This bill would expand access to all Veterans and their families.

Time spent in the natural world offers many benefits. Anecdotal evidence suggests that exercise, fresh air, and the beauty of nature can have dramatic calming and restorative impact<sup>2</sup>.

All of our military veterans and families deserve our support, this is one very important way we can provide for them as citizens of Maine. Sierra Club urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 56.

Sincerely,

Becky Layton Bartovics

Sierra Club Maine, Volunteer Leadership

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sierraclub.org/military-outdoors>

<sup>2</sup> [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_forest\\_bathing\\_is\\_good\\_for\\_your\\_health](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_forest_bathing_is_good_for_your_health)