



Senator Peggy Rotundo  
Representative Melanie Sachs  
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
*Via email*

April 26, 2023

Dear Senator Rotundo, Rep. Sachs, and distinguished members of the AFA committee,

The Appalachian Mountain Club enthusiastically supports LD 1156 *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Promote the Design, Development and Maintenance of Trails for Outdoor Recreation and Active Transportation*.

Trails are so fundamental that we tend to take them for granted. They connect us physically and socially, supporting daily activities—exercise, dog walking, catching up with a friend—as well as far-flung adventures. In short, they improve our quality of life. No wonder trails and greenways raise local property values.

Trails contribute to our \$3 billion outdoor recreation industry. From Riley Township to Cutler, from Monson to St. Francis, remote trails like the Grafton Loop Trail, the Bold Coast Trail, Tumbledown and Borestone Mountains, and the St. John Valley Heritage Trail draw users to rural areas, where they spend locally on lodging, meals, gas, supplies, and incidentals.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in outdoor activities has skyrocketed, evidenced by increased traffic, overflowing parking lots, and erosion. Coming on top of longstanding inadequate funding for the development and maintenance of trails, the situation not only diminishes the trail user's experience, but leads to both friction with neighboring property owners and safety hazards. Even prior to the pandemic, the Coastal Trail at Quoddy Head State Park was severely eroded, though it grazes precipitous drops of 50 feet or more. Mt. Kineo's unfortunately named Indian Trail has borne a stunning amount of traffic despite its steep pitch and eroded surface. Fortunately, nobody has been seriously injured at either location—yet.

LD 1156 would address these challenges. Building new trails will disperse users, reducing conflict and trail damage, as well as drawing trail users to enjoy and spend money in more of Maine. Investing in the maintenance of trails will improve the visitor experience, ensuring return visits, and prevent potentially serious mishaps.

Finally, LD 1156 can help address a third challenge: unequal access. We all enjoy the physical, mental and social benefits of time spent outside, but not everyone has the same opportunity. Multiple studies have found that communities disadvantaged by race, income, or age have less access to nearby trails and parks, and Maine is no exception.<sup>1</sup> A 2017 article in the Portland *Press-Herald* found that Maine lags

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://harvard-cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ebd2c9acc0b14918895b59de4e9842cb>



behind in providing access to all.<sup>2</sup> We have seen improvements in recent years, but as the state with the highest median age, and as a tourism destination, we can and should do better.

By investing in Maine trails, we can invest in our communities and in our physical, mental, and social health. We can ensure public safety, disperse trail use, and quell tensions. Best of all, we can make the considerable benefits of outdoor recreation available to everyone.

Please pass LD 1156 to send this question to the voters. We are confident they will strongly support it.

Sincerely,

Eliza Townsend  
Maine Conservation Policy Director

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pressherald.com/2017/11/12/maine-lags-in-providing-state-park-access-to-people-with-disabilities/>