

April 27, 2023

Kaitlyn Nuzzo, Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Maine
kaitlyn.nuzzo@tnc.org



Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations

RE: 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

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations, my name is Kaitlyn Nuzzo and I am the Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to submit written comments in support of 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.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres. We also work across Maine to restore rivers and streams, partner with fishermen in the Gulf of Maine to rebuild groundfish populations, and develop innovative solutions to address our changing climate.

LD 1156 would support the design, development and maintenance of trails across our great state. These investments would result in new nonmotorized, motorized, and multi-use trails that could be enjoyed by Mainers and visitors alike.

Access to nature and outdoor spaces provides many benefits to people, including improvements to our physical and mental health as well as overall quality of life. Maine's existing trail network already contributes to both our quality of life and tourism economies, but communities and trail groups have identified a large backlog of trail projects that would bring added benefit and need attention. As a landowning and trail maintaining organization, we know firsthand how critical these investments are and how expensive design, development, and maintenance of our beloved trails can be.

TNC especially appreciates the requirement that priority "must be given to projects that follow sustainable design standards and incorporate accessibility and inclusive design standards". TNC Maine is currently working to develop an accessible "All Persons Trail" on one of our preserves in the Katahdin region. This work has been rewarding and we want more of these accessible trails to be developed across the state, but the design and build out can be more expensive than standard trails. We hope this investment will support and spur more accessible trails by offsetting the additional costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of LD 1156.