



Caribou Historical Center & Museum

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April 26, 2023

Dear Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

My name is Christina Kane-Gibson, and I would like to submit this letter of support for H.P. 568, *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Restore Historic Community Buildings* and H.P. 735, *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Capital Improvements for Arts and Cultural Facilities*.

As a wife and mother of two boys (10 and 13), an engaged member of the Caribou community, a small business owner and President of the non-profit *Caribou Historical Center and Museum*, I see tremendous value in both bills, especially for those of us in Aroostook County and rural communities.

At the *Caribou Historical Center & Museum*, we are working to preserve the past with our sights set on the future. I have made it my mission to work with the youngest generations to generate genuine interest in Caribou's story - fostering community pride and a sense of belonging. It's difficult to capture the Caribou spirit in a single sentence, but whether you live near or far, Caribou remains your "forever hometown." It's important for us - and for Maine - to keep these bonds strong! However, when it comes to funds, it's often difficult to find the money we need to grow our mission. Most times, available funds only allow us to maintain the status quo. In fact, I invested thousands of my own personal funds in 2022 just to set things right post-COVID. It's not sustainable.

At 18 years old, I moved away and stayed "urban" (Boston and Austin) for 20+ years - but Maine calls you home. I finally returned to raise my children in this idyllic "hometown" in hopes that their childhoods matched my own unique and happy experiences. I was approached to help get the museum back on track post-COVID, and I have been trying to inject new ideas and bring in volunteers of all ages for a re-freshed approach on historic organizations. I am also trying to eliminate the name "society" to be more inclusive. Once again, we need help!

As a marketing professional, I can tell you it is harder than ever to connect. Building a new brand takes time, dedication and funding. We need help re-inventing our community space - monies that will allow us to make much-needed capital improvements and preserve the historic structures unique to Caribou.

I urge you to support these bills. It is critical to the hard work many have put in to engage young Mainers and foster their community and state pride. These future leaders and future business owners are vital to our rural communities. Our historic organizations help them feel connected to our communities with a desire to make everything even better and brighter for their own future families!

Sincerely,

Christina Kane-Gibson, C.P.C.

President, *Caribou Historical Center & Museum - A Whittier Memorial*