



Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

April 28, 2023

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*

Dear Chair Rotundo, Chair Sachs, and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is the state’s oldest and largest wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony 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*.

LD 1156 would invest \$30 million toward the design, development, and maintenance of non-motorized, motorized, and multi-use trails statewide. This investment has broad support and will help contribute to Maine’s economy, environment, and our quality of life. Trails are an invaluable asset that support our access to the outdoors. They help people connect with the beauty of Maine and in turn, help encourage them to hopefully want to protect it.

Additionally, well-kept and thoughtfully-designed trail systems can simultaneously help us protect healthy ecosystems. The world is experiencing a biodiversity crisis and Maine is no exception. Wildlife in Maine face a multitude of threats – climate change, habitat loss and habitat degradation, disease, invasive species, and more. Besides the economic and recreational benefits, trails can be integrated with other conservation efforts. When designed and managed with wildlife in mind, trails can guide users away from particularly sensitive areas, limit the density of trails in some areas, as well as protect waterways from erosion and wildlife from disturbance. The benefits of investing in Maine’s trail systems are significant and long-lasting for both recreationists and wildlife. We urge the Committee to support this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca “Ches” Gundrum
Policy Advocate