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January 20, 2024

Ms. Tiffany Strout
State Representative
House Minority Office
Room 332, State House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0002

Re: LD 1893: An Act to Allow a Municipality to Impose a Fee on Short-term Rentals for the Benefit of That Municipality

Dear Representative Strout,

I am writing to oppose LD 1893, *An Act to allow a Municipality to Impose a Fee on Short-term Rentals for the Benefit of that Municipality*.

My family's property in Georgetown has been in our family since 1936. Once my parents' permanent residence, it is now a summer vacation rental. Our family uses the house year-round, so it is not vacant when not in use as a vacation rental. We are active members of our local community.

Our vacation rental business (Merwick Cottage, LLC) is professionally managed by Cottage Connection of Maine ("CCM"), also a small family business. CCM does a great job of managing the many facets of our business and the hospitality we offer to our guests. We are part of the economic life of Maine. I have written a detailed guide to businesses in Georgetown and surrounding towns which I provide to our guests so as to promote local spending.

What, then, is the purpose of LD 1893? It seems to me it provides a tool for municipalities to eliminate small businesses such as ours. Is this meant to be in the service of housing justice? Our house is on the water, with a tax bill to go with it. That is fair, and I work hard to keep our taxes paid. But if we were forced out, would that serve the needs of those seeking affordable housing? Certainly not. We are a middle-class family working to hold on. If we were forced to sell, our home would undoubtedly go to someone with far deeper pockets than ours. So, it becomes a case of *be careful what you wish for* – a fishing village to become a Millionaires' Row? That has certainly happened elsewhere.

Tourism is a very important sector of the Maine economy. I suggest that small businesses such as ours be permitted the freedom to operate in accordance with regulations that are fair to everyone. The Maine State Legislature should stand for free enterprise, not using regulations to force small businesses under.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to speak with me about these issues.

Respectfully,



Linda Tharp Tsao

cc: Audrey Miller, Owner
Cottage Connection of Maine