



**Alison Sucy, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs
on Behalf of the Maine Tourism Association**

In Support of

LD 2191, An Act to Provide Relief to Small Businesses Affected by Severe Weather-related Events

February 13, 2024

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

My name is Alison Sucy and I am the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Tourism Association. The Maine Tourism Association is the state's largest non-profit tourism organization. For over 100 years, MTA has been promoting Maine and supporting members in every type of tourism business such as lodging, restaurants, retail, guides, campgrounds, tour operators, amusements, and museums, historical, and cultural attractions. I offer this testimony in support of LD 2191.

There is no doubt that the snowstorms, power outages, flooding, and high winds caused damage across the state, and severe damage to many Maine counties. MTA recently polled its members asking about the damage and the results are that 64% of those responding said they had sustained damage. Further, 43% said business this winter was worse than last, 23% said it was the same, while only 2% said business was better than last winter.

A relief fund would be a tremendous help to our businesses, particularly our seasonal ones. Such hotels, restaurants, B&Bs, and campgrounds, for example, aren't earning any income now but must begin to do repairs as well as regular maintenance and begin to hire staff so they can open in a couple of months. This is hard to do when you have large expenses and no income. Without the necessary repairs, they won't be able to open on time and thus continue to fall behind in revenue. For this reason, we ask that when the rules are made for this fund that loss of revenue is not the only factor in determining eligibility, but that property damage be included.

Tourism is a tremendous contributor to the Maine economy as evidenced by this 2022 data from the Maine Office of Tourism:

- Total economic impact of tourism in Maine - \$15.8 billion

The Maine Tourism Association is the state's largest advocate for all tourism-related businesses. Incorporated in 1922, MTA members include lodging, restaurants, camps, campgrounds, retail, outdoor recreation, guides, tour operators, transportation, amusements, and cultural and historical attractions. MTA also operates on behalf of the state seven State Visitor Information Centers from Kittery to Calais, and annually produces the state's official travel planner, Maine Invites You (since 1933).

- Tourism supported 151,000 Maine jobs
- Every 102 visitors support a new job in Maine

- Direct tourism expenditures - \$8.6 billion
- Without tourism, Maine households would have paid \$2,172 more in state and local taxes

Tourism benefits all Mainers, not just those in tourism jobs. There are thousands of ancillary businesses that benefit from a strong tourism economy such as contracting, landscaping, farming, fishing, florists, wineries, and breweries. Ensuring that our small tourism businesses can recover from this winter's storms is crucial to everyone employed in these businesses as well as Maine's economy overall.

We respectfully ask that you support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.