



*Together, we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.*

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*Testimony related to LD2258 to be given via Zoom on 3/12/24 by  
Kate Vickery, Portland, Maine; President & CEO of Make-A-Wish Maine*

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation. My name is Kate Vickery. I am a resident of Portland and serve as the President and CEO of Make-A-Wish Maine. I am testifying today in support of LD 2258.

Make-A-Wish is a nonprofit organization that grants wishes to children with critical illnesses. Here in Maine, our chapter was founded in 1992 and since then has granted more than 1800 wishes to kids in all 16 counties. The average cost of a wish is \$8,500. All wish expenses are fully covered, including travel and spending money. Our objective is to provide the child and family with a worry-free experience. Make-A-Wish Maine raises funds through the generosity of individuals and businesses, and events conducted by us and by outside community groups.

One of our longest standing community partners is the Portland Sea Dogs. For twenty years the team has gone above and beyond with donations of merchandise, money, facilities, time, and events. They are always one of our first phone calls when we need something special. They never hesitate to find a way to say yes.

For the last 10 years, the Sea Dogs have partnered with Make-A-Wish Maine to host dozens of wish families on an annual basis at their Field of Dreams game at Hadlock Field. They provide VIP access for wish kids to interact with their players in addition to visibility for the organization to attendees at the game and via the radio broadcast. This event has become crucial to establishing our Alumni program at Make-A-Wish Maine and is a sell-out (with a wait list) every year due to interest and demand from our families to attend. Additionally, for many of our kids and families, the ability to attend and have the accessibility that the Sea Dogs provide to them through this event is not an opportunity they are able to experience on their own, outside of our partnership.

There is no other entertainment-based organization in this state that provides as much support to our ability to deliver our mission to children battling life-threatening medical conditions as the Portland Sea Dogs. In addition to assisting us with wishes, the Sea Dogs themselves have been directly involved in granting wishes for many of our kids. We were especially appreciative of their willingness to help deliver messages of hope to wish kids during the pandemic. Staff, players, and most importantly Slugger, were all involved in doing what they could to help us fulfill our mission during such a difficult time.

The bill before you all would undoubtedly benefit the Sea Dogs most of all through the building of needed facilities at Hadlock Field to maintain the franchise in Portland.



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Hadlock field itself has been a wonderful resource to our organization outside of the Sea Dogs' presence. It has proven to be an attractive venue for external groups interested in holding various events that benefit and advance the work of community non-profits. The State's support of enabling a top-notch baseball facility to exist and remain in Portland can indeed benefit all of Maine.

The work we do at Make-A-Wish is life changing for so many families across Maine. Recent studies have shown that the impact of granting a wish to a child aids in healing and recovery. It gives them something to look forward to outside of more treatments and hospital visits; it provides relief from traumatic stress; increases their emotional well-being; encourages their strength to fight and can often be a turning point for them and their families. Additionally, the positive impact of a wish has a ripple effect to all community members who are involved and engaged in a wish come true. Our work, and our wishes, would be severely impacted if the Sea Dogs were no longer in Portland.

On behalf of Make-A-Wish Maine, I urge this committee to carefully consider their vote on this legislation. We believe the presence and the positive impact of the Portland Sea Dogs organization, which could be impacted by this legislation, is vital to our community in so many ways, and provides a tremendous benefit for Maine people.

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