



## PISCATAQUIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Paul T. Davis, District 1

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February 6, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

This testimony in support of LD 183 is provided on behalf of the Piscataquis County Commissioners. At 2,528 million acres, Piscataquis County is the second largest county in Maine. Containing some of the greatest beauty in Maine, its taxpayers face the challenges of living and working in one of the most economically challenged and oldest population areas in the state, if not most of the country.

Opportunities to expand the tax base through commercial development and increased housing development rely mostly on private investment. LD 183 would ensure that at least 50% of land in Piscataquis County remains in private ownership, allowing for enhanced economic development.

Maine's stated Climate Council goals include establishing a public threshold of 30% by 2030. According to a 2021 study published by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, 756,705 acres in Piscataquis are already held by public interests, representing 29.9% of property. There is much concern that to reach the statewide goal of 30%, land rich counties like Piscataquis, Washington and Somerset will bear a disproportionate burden of properties excluded from development and potentially removed from our tax rolls.

While the Commissioners of Piscataquis agree that protection of our natural resources is important, there needs to be a balance between conservation and opportunities for growth and revitalization in our towns, plantation, and unorganized townships.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael L. Williams".

Michael L. Williams  
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