



February 10, 2025

**RE: Testimony in Opposition to LD 173 - An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements**

Dear Chair Baldacci, Chair Roberts, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

As Executive Director of Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM), a statewide community lake science organization, I am asking the Committee to **Oppose LD 173** - An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements.

Maine's lakes and rivers are among our state's most valuable natural resources, supporting local economies, recreation, and wildlife. A critical source of funding in protecting these waters from aquatic invasive species (AIS) comes from the Lake and River Protection Sticker, which has been directly tied to the boat registration process. LSM is concerned that by exempting a significant number of boats from registering, the fallout will include the loss of Sticker sales and hence funding for valuable aquatic invasive species work.

Non-government organizations (NGO) such as LSM, rely on funding from the Lake and River Protection Sticker to support local lake associations and volunteer efforts in preventing and reducing the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). LSM has trained over 5,000 *volunteers* to survey lakes for AIS with the primary AIS goal of prevention and early detection. As a member of the state's AIS Rapid Response Team, we also assist lakes facing new invasive plant infestations mobilizing *volunteers* to conduct comprehensive surveys to determine the extent of an infestation. This work includes assisting communities in resource limited areas of the state struggling with AIS infestation. To complete this work, LSM depends on not only grants and donations, but also support from the Lake and River Protection Sticker sales. Reduction in Sticker revenue jeopardizes not only LSM's AIS prevention work, but the efforts of volunteers, lake associations and other lake-focused NGOs.

Funds generated from the Lake and River Protection Sticker help train and equip our dedicated volunteer invasive plant patrollers, whose contributions in volunteer hours multiply the impact of these funds tenfold. Even if the sticker remains a requirement, without the registration process to ensure purchase, enforcement will be nearly impossible. This could lead to a reduction in funding for aquatic invasive species prevention, early detection, and mitigation, ultimately increasing the risk of costly and damaging infestations in Maine's waters.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote **Ought Not to Pass on LD 173**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alison Cooney, LSM Executive Director  
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