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President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Testimony in Support of LD 511
Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of
the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
March 4, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am here today to express my strong support for LD 511, “Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council.”

This bill would direct the Department of Transportation to remove state-owned existing railroad track that is inactive along the section known as the Berlin Subdivision between the City of Portland and the City of Auburn, and replace it with an interim bicycle and pedestrian trail. And it would direct them to do so within existing and available funding resources and in compliance with all permits and municipal agreements.

I am very passionate about expanding access to the outdoors through the use of rail trails. Walking and biking are both low-barrier ways to enjoy time outside and get some exercise. According to the CDC, access to places to engage in physical activities like trails encourage those in the surrounding community to be active more often because trails provide a location that is insulated from traffic and other hazards.[1] And trails in particular are a good investment – the American Heart Association found that for each dollar a community invests into trails, almost three dollars could be saved in medical costs later because of increased physical activity.[2] I think everyone can agree that investing in the continued health of our communities is worth the effort.

Not only would building out our state’s network of trails benefit our local communities, but it would also further cement Maine’s reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation. And I don’t think I need to tell anyone in this room how vital outdoor recreation tourism is in our state or how increased use of trails by tourists would benefit the communities surrounding those trails.

Thank you for your attention today. I urge you to pass LD 511 to provide more outdoor recreation options to Mainers and to all visitors to our state.

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-places/php/key-topics/parks.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/parks.htm

[2] <https://www.heart.org/-/media/files/about-us/policy-research/fact-sheets/physical-activity/active-transportation-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>