

March 12, 2025

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Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

LD 226—An Act to Protect the Cultural Resources and Historical Heritage of Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Protections and LD 735—An Act to Protect Sand Dunes on Sears Island and to Establish Criteria for Legislation Regarding Land Development

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Karen Blakelock, and I am a policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to submit written comments against LD 226 and LD 735.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres.

TNC Maine supports the responsible deployment of well-sited offshore wind as part of a diverse portfolio of renewable energy resources. Our team has contributed substantial research, science, decision support tools, and guidance focused on advancing offshore wind that maximizes benefits and minimizes harm to nature and people. We are applying our science and expertise to help site these projects responsibly in the ocean environment to have the greatest possible positive impact for addressing climate change.

Port development is a separate aspect of the larger offshore wind conversation. TNC supports the work being done to identify whether port development in Maine is viable and to continue the thorough and inclusive environmental review process that identifies and requires plans to minimize or mitigate any impacts. TNC Maine supports a full public process as part of the environmental review to determine the best outcome for Maine.

Prematurely eliminating Sears Island as a possible location for development subverts a full public process and should not be done at this point in time. We should allow for the full environmental review before making any decisions that would limit our state's ability to meet our clean energy goals and benefit from the additional economic opportunity a port would provide to the state.

TNC remains committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends and strongly supports continued efforts to evaluate the environmental impacts associated with offshore wind

and port development. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments in opposition to these bills.