

Dear Representatives of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Clastel Patrick and I am a student at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor. I strongly urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 735 - An Act to Protect Sand Dunes on Sears Island and to Establish Criteria for Legislation Regarding Land Development.

While I now live in Bar Harbor, I grew up in Tampa, Florida. In the several years before moving up north, I would spend 2-3 days a week in St. Petersburg involved with the Boy Scouts of America and Sea Scouts, just across the bridge from downtown Tampa. St. Petersburg is lively, thriving, and a home to critical ecosystems. Sand dunes as borders to marshes, beaches, and preserves have protected communities throughout natural disasters such as hurricanes and tropical storms. Sand dunes, when conserved and allowed to grow native flora, are one of the first lines of defense against water and erosion both during severe weather events and daily tidal motion.

When sand dunes are not protected, and allowed to just meld into territory that can be manipulated by construction, tourism, and trampling, they lose their structural integrity and the protective qualities that make them critical to coastal ecosystems. I have seen first-hand when dunes were not properly managed and maintained, and when the water eventually came to meet them they were unable to serve any ecological purpose. While the sand dunes on Sears island are not necessarily protecting storefronts or homes they are serving a critical role in preventing erosion of its shoreline, and I believe we need legislation to protect it, which is why I support this measure. Thank you for your time.