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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1264

Resolve, Requiring the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Modify the Deed That Conveyed Montpelier, the General Henry Knox Museum in Thomaston, to the Friends of Montpelier.

April 1, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Andy Cutko, and I am the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL). I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) neither for nor against LD 1264, *Resolve, Requiring the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Modify the Deed That Conveyed Montpelier, the General Henry Knox Museum in Thomaston, to the Friends of Montpelier.*

The Knox Museum in Thomaston honors General Henry Knox, an American military officer who served during the Revolutionary War. The Museum, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was owned by BPL until 1999, when an act of the Maine legislature authorized its conveyance to the Friends of Montpelier. As part of that conveyance, a Historic Place Easement was created to ensure that the structure is maintained according to historic preservation standards in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. In recent years, despite lengthy correspondence, numerous discussions, and a legal mediation session, the parties have not been able to agree to maintenance and preservation plans that meet these standards.

The deed of conveyance states that “in the event that the Property is not preserved, maintained and protected, then the Property shall revert to the State of Maine.” The Bureau of Parks and Lands lacks the financial or staffing capacity to maintain the Museum adequately. At the same time, the Bureau is concerned about the precedent of extinguishing a Historic Place Easement because the owner is not able to meet the terms of the easement. If the Resolve is passed, we are concerned that it could set the stage for other owners of other historic sites to seek legislative fixes instead of complying with clear standards.

I can be available at the work session to answer any questions.

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