



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS  
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 761**

*An Act to Support the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites*

**April 1, 2025**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Ron Hunt, and I am the Director of Park Operations and Maintenance for the Bureau of Parks and Lands. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) as Neither For Nor Against LD 761, *An Act to Support the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites*.

The Bureau of Parks and Lands manages 15 State Historic Sites that represent Maine's rich and varied history. In addition to these designated State Historic Sites, several buildings within Maine's State Parks are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These Historic Sites and historic structures illuminate Maine's connections with indigenous cultures, early European settlements, and pivotal moments in American history. These sites are generally open to the public and range from Fort McClary in Kittery, which has stood for 275 years to protect the Pistaqua River, to the West Quoddy Head Lighthouse in Lubec, which marks the easternmost point in the United States, to the Fort Kent Blockhouse, which is the only surviving American fortification built during the border tensions known as the Aroostook War in 1838.

Maine's State Historic sites attract visitors from far and wide, contributing significantly to our local economies. They also offer educational opportunities for our children, teaching them about the events and people that have shaped our state and nation – both before and after European settlement.

We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to address much-needed deferred maintenance in our State Parks over the past few years with state Covid relief funds allocated by Governor Mills and approved by the legislature. At the same time, we acknowledge that a similar investment is needed in our Historic Sites, many of which are at an inflection point. Leaky roofs and structural deficiencies make buildings at some of these sites more susceptible to weather, and in some cases, like Eagle Island, has led to significant mold issues. In total, we estimate that Historic Site structures managed by our Bureau need more than \$30 million in repair and preservation costs.

Realistically, however, we recognize this session's funding limitations but appreciate the opportunity to raise awareness about the needs of Historic Sites to inform ongoing conversations.

I would be glad to answer any questions now or at the work session.

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