

**Testimony of Eliza Townsend
in support of LD 762**

***An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of
State Historic Sites***

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

AMC is a people-oriented conservation nonprofit; our mission is the protection, understanding, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We have 6,200 members in Maine and manage 130,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County for multiple use, including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and outdoor education. We pay property taxes on all of our land.

We enthusiastically support LD 762. As you may know, the state's historic sites were ineligible to share in the \$50 million allocated by the 130th legislature from the American Rescue Plan Act for investment in Maine's state parks. Like the state parks, the historic sites have long suffered from a lack of investment.

Maine's 15 historic sites offer a range of experiences, including marking important events, activities, and locations. As important, they offer open space for rest, recreation, and renewal of spirit. Many sit at beautiful locations overlooking rivers or the ocean and offer open space for movement and exploration or for picnicking. Thus, they offer low-cost, accessible destinations helping everyone to get outdoors, which is important to maintain our physical, mental, and social health.

AMC's first property acquisition in Maine surrounds the Katahdin Iron Works near Brownville, the remnants of a nineteenth century industrial site. There visitors can see the blast furnace and charcoal kiln, the only remaining structures of a facility that manufactured pig iron in the Maine wilderness for roughly 50 years and once supported a village of 200 workers.

Without maintenance, the structures continue to deteriorate. Further, the site lacks adequate interpretive signage and materials, with the result that the fascinating story of this once bustling place is largely unknown.

AMC is undertaking a few projects to ensure that neighboring communities have access to recreational opportunities and can further benefit economically from the presence of nearby conserved land and properties. Enhancing the Katahdin Iron Works Historic Site could contribute to that effort. We would be pleased to partner with the Bureau of Parks and Lands to continue to draw visitors to Brownville and Brownville Junction, Milo and surrounding communities.

From Brownville to Machias, Fort Kent to Kittery, Maine's state historic sites offer not only a glimpse into our past, but open space for free or low-cost recreation. They are valuable resources deserving of maintenance, preservation, and promotion, and we ask you to support LD 762.