

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

My name is Don Kleiner, and I am a resident of Union. This year marks my 39th year as a working Maine Guide. Unfortunately, my spring fishing season is underway, preventing me from joining you in person today.

Over my career, I've served on the Sportsman's Forest Landowners Alliance (including two terms as chair), the Sportsman's Landowner Relations Advisory Board (also as chair), Keeping Maine's Forests, and for two terms on the Land for Maine's Future Board. Like this committee, I am acutely aware that most of the land in Maine is privately held, and a significant amount of outdoor recreation takes place on that private land. And not just the large tracts of the unorganized territories, but also the farms and woodlots closer to where we all live and play.

I wholeheartedly support LD 1441, a Resolve to Establish the Commission to Study the Future of Recreational Access in Maine. I thank my friend Senator Black for bringing this vital issue forward. I trust that this committee is well-versed in this matter and will make helpful refinements to the specifics, while supporting the overarching goals of maintaining our heritage of open land access for all, increasing our outdoor recreation economy, and supporting our landowner hosts.

The Department's Landowner Relations Program has become the success this committee envisioned not so long ago, but it still falls short of addressing all that needs to be done in this critical area.

I encourage the committee to adopt a broader perspective on land users, including recreationists beyond those licensed by Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The impacts from these groups are already significant and are projected to increase. I draw your attention to the recent Outdoor Recreation Roadmap and the Maine Office of Tourism's Destination Management Plan. Both documents aim to increase outdoor recreation activity beyond hunting and fishing, which will inevitably impact Maine's private landowners. These plans currently offer limited consideration for the landowners whose cooperation is essential for this increased economic growth. That needs to change if we are to be successful. Polling done by the Maine Woodland Owners, and a project I worked on for the Maine Professional Guides Association, suggest that it is not necessarily financial support that landowners need and want. This is a thought worth further exploration, to be sure.

I strongly recommend including representatives from the Offices of Tourism and Outdoor Recreation in this discussion. It's worth noting that the Office of Tourism made a

commendable effort to educate visitors about responsible conduct on private land when usage surged during the pandemic. That, I believe, was very well done and well-received.

I am delighted not only to support this legislation, but also to offer any assistance I can on this important topic. I encourage you to give this resolve a unanimous "ought to pass" and set a reasonable deadline for a plan of action to come back to this committee.

Thank you for your consideration.