



Matthew Levin
PO Box 812
Camden, ME 04843
207-236-2478

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Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Matthew Levin and I am the Director of Hotels for the Bay View Collection. I also am the former Board Chair of Hospitality Maine, as well as the current Board President for the New England Inns & Resorts Association.

I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to LD 1476, “An Act to Support Maine’s Homeless Shelters by Imposing a Fee for Booking Hotels, Short-term Rentals and Recreational Vehicle Camping Reservations.” While I deeply support efforts to address homelessness in our state, this bill places an undue and counterproductive burden on one of Maine’s most vital industries—tourism and hospitality.

As someone who works in this sector for the past 22 years, I’ve seen firsthand how fragile it can be. Our industry is still recovering from the long-term impacts of the pandemic, and in 2024, we experienced a concerning 9% decline in summer visitation. That’s nearly one out of every ten visitors deciding not to return. At a time when we need to be doing everything we can to attract and welcome travelers, LD 1476 risks pushing more of them away.

Adding a \$2.00 fee to every lodging stay—regardless of whether it’s in a hotel, a vacation rental, or a campground—may seem modest on paper, but the message it sends is loud and clear: Maine is becoming more expensive to visit. We are already perceived as a high-cost destination, and with one of the highest statewide lodging taxes in the country, we are losing ground to neighboring states that are actively outperforming us in occupancy and affordability.

This fee may be labeled as a “support mechanism,” but to visitors—and even to many locals—it’s a tax. And it arrives at a time of heightened economic uncertainty, when families are watching their budgets and businesses are doing everything they can to stay competitive.

Maine’s small inns, seasonal campgrounds, and family-run lodging businesses form the backbone of our rural communities. Burdening them with additional costs and regulations now could have long-term consequences not just for individual owners, but for the broader economy that relies on tourism to thrive.

Again, I fully support the goal of funding homeless shelters and ensuring support for those in need. But we must find more balanced, sustainable ways to do that—ways that don’t weaken another vulnerable population: the small businesses and seasonal workers who depend on Maine’s tourism economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to oppose LD 1476 and work with your colleagues to find better solutions that lift up all Mainers.

Respectfully,
Matthew Levin

