



MAINE CAMPGROUND OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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Senator Curry

Representative Gere

Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee

My name is Debra Hart and I am a resident of Manchester, Maine. I am presenting this testimony on behalf of my client, the Maine Campground Owners Association (MECOA).

The Maine Campground Owners Association is opposed to this legislation on several fronts. First and foremost, this bill has an emergency preamble, which would make it law upon passing the Legislature and being signed by the Governor. As it is now May, this bill could likely impact this summer's camping season, which begins in earnest in June. These are the months when children are out of school and families begin to take vacations staying in our campgrounds. These guests come from other states, but as importantly many campers are Maine residents that utilize this wonderful homegrown experience of some wonderful campgrounds with dedicated staff who make their vacation time an experience showcasing all that the various parts of the State has to offer.

As you will hear from Hospitality Maine, tourism was down around 9% last year; this proposed \$2 fee on a camping site or lodging place at campgrounds would be added to the 9% lodging tax we already pay. This kind of increase is not sustainable or helpful for an industry that works tirelessly at a seasonal business that competes with other New England states that may be seen as more affordable. In addition, we are very concerned that this coming camping season may see fewer Canadian visitors, and those visitors have consistently

avored the Maine experience we offer ~~ we are very much hoping they continue to visit our State and our campgrounds.

In closing, we cannot stress enough the devastating and chilling impact this new fee, which is really a tax on our industry, will have. While we do not argue that affordable housing is an issue in our State, and have the utmost sympathies for those who find themselves in need of shelter, we do not believe this tax will solve that problem, and will definitely have an impact on an industry that already pays many taxes to the State, employs a number of Maine people, and supports their local communities where they are located.

We respectfully ask that you vote this bill Ought Not to Pass.