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## **Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association**

In Support for

***LD 1762 - An Act to Protect Recreational Trails by Establishing the Trails for the Future Program***

May 6, 2025

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Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am here on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) in support for LD 1762 *An Act to Protect Recreational Trails by Establishing the Trails for the Future Program*.

An important strength of this bill is the degree to which it supports and makes primary that the funds will be provided based on the robustness of the community engagement to establish trails and support effective protection and management of recreational trails. Section 1982-A(4) of the proposed legislation ensures that any alterations to protect trails must be approved by the local clubs or groups responsible for their maintenance regardless of the type of recreational activity. This provision continues the best practice by allowing those who know these trails best have a voice that is not only heard but instrumental in shaping future decisions.

Additionally, the bill honors community knowledge and investment with fostering shared responsibility which will enhance the long-term sustainability of trail programs, prevents top down decision making that might otherwise overlook the nuances of local trail use, cultural significance, and other practical concerns. Transparency and collaborative approaches with full accountability are vital to address use concerns and grow trail access for all types of users. Local support is crucial to protection activity and selecting based on the amount of community support that exists for the preservation of trails is not only logical, it provides thoughtful and balanced framework that honors community democracy and stewardship.

For all of these reasons, officials support the program as designed by LD 1762 and thank you for keeping these important locally led elements of evaluating grant recipients on proposed trail protection and investment.