

132nd Legislature, LD 1737
**" An Act to Ensure the Future of
Maine's Sporting Camp Heritage"**



Testimony in Support as Amended by Sponsor Amendment

May 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Igor Sikorsky, the owner of Bradford Camps.

Our sporting camp has been in continuous operation for 130 years, and during that time had five owners. After 29 years of our ownership, we have decided to sell. During a 2024 negotiation with a prospective buyer, it was learned that the existing grandfathered septic system must by law be upgraded to a new system and have all the plumbing inspected and approved to current code. The work was estimated at about \$200,000. This expense killed the pending sale of the camps, which was a great disappointment to both parties.

We spent time considering whether to close the camps entirely. In the end we decided to go ahead and do the code upgrades, costing \$200,000. This allows us now to hopefully sell to a new owner. The expense will not be recuperated in the sale price.

While it might be said that the septic upgrade is an overall improvement, I do not think it is. Cost aside, there are downsides to the new system:

- There are six underground tanks that now must be pumped on a regular basis
- There are three underground electric pumps, which require maintenance, and are subject to mechanical failure over time.

In summary it is a huge initial expense, with annual added expenses, it is prone to eventual failure, it requires cleaning and maintenance, and it will not work as well or last as long.

My grandfathered septic systems had no failures as defined by plumbing codes (wet ground, and/or backing up water in pipes). The upgrade was not required to continue our operation. The upgrade (upgrade to current code with an inspection) is only required for a new owner to apply for a new restaurant/lodging license.

We went ahead and installed the new system, but I still am not sure if it was the right decision. Taking away the installation cost of \$200,000, I think it would have been economically and environmentally better to grandfather the old system. A good compromise would be to require a new sporting camp owner to have a replacement septic plan in place, which could be installed in the event of failure.

I hope the new system is carefree, and works better than my old system, but I doubt it. Time will tell.

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