

Maine River Lodge
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5/19/2025

Esteemed Committee Members,

My name is Ron Greco and I run Maine River Lodge in Southern Aroostook County. I am a director of the Maine Sporting Camp Association and I am testifying in opposition of LD 1737.

I think it is important to understand the history of this bill. For several years, the MSCA has been trying to fix multiple issues related to licensing requirements for traditional Maine Sporting Camps. Firstly, many traditional facilities that have operated for decades have been sold. Upon sale, the plumbing inspector in the North Maine Woods has required the new camp owners to make upgrades to continue to allow these businesses to operate. Making them conform to current State plumbing codes. Often times, this would require significant upgrades to plumbing and waste disposal systems to maintain their ability to operate. This has put several facilities out of business or forced them to be privatized.

The second issue is related to facilities that were not traditional sporting camps getting sporting camp licenses and taking advantage of the ability to apply for a lodge permit for moose hunting to supplement their income. Watching traditional hotels, private members only clubs and rafting companies receive these permits that are completely outside their business model was frustrating. It was also keeping traditional sporting camps from receiving the financial support that was necessary to help improve their businesses. The intent of the bill was to help sporting camps have extra capital to improve their businesses. The extra capital would be used to make capital improvements to facilities and increase the marketing capabilities to increase usage rates for Maine's historic Sporting Camps.

This bill could have easily addressed both issues. Instead this bill as presented is littered with things that increase costs to Maine, to Maine Sporting Camps and adversely impact our ability to persevere by being overburdened with regulatory requirements. As a fervent capitalist, I am shocked and dismayed by the language of this bill to increase regulatory burdens that protect a few operations while hurting the majority and providing barriers to entry for startup businesses. I

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fail to see the benefit of restricting what marketing methods a sporting camp can use to sell their products and services. How does limiting the use of the largest booking platforms for lodging in the world help Maine Sporting Camps? How does using these marketing platform vs others change the product we deliver? What other marketing platforms that we use to market our services should also be limited or banned to preserve our culture. Why are we allowed to use hunt brokers like link's wild safari's, bookyourhunt.com or Cabelas Signature Events? Should we just ban all internet marketing platforms? Eliminate our websites altogether? NO! This is all ludicrous, just like many of the other provisions of this bill.

Why does the size of the town matter? What happens if these towns grow or the surrounding areas go from unorganized to organized? Does that change the business model of the Maine Sporting Camp? Does the heritage become less important to save? No. Probably quite the opposite.

How do you tell if a caretaker is present or nearby? What does nearby mean? Is that for the whole year or just part of the year? This is so ambiguous that it has no possibility of reasonably being applied. And at this time of divisive politics, will this be weaponized to remove licenses? How do we ensure each inspector is following the same objective criteria? Every time a leader or inspector changes, we could be looking at this being applied differently. I'm not sure how that is good for a business either.

Many sporting camps thrive off of day visitors stopping to buy gas or have a meal while ATV'ng, snowmobiling, fishing and hunting in remote areas. How does limiting this type of business help Sporting Camps? For several places this is their lifeblood and I see no way this harms the traditional Maine Sporting Camps heritage.

There is currently no sales tax on services. Where are we going with this? Are we looking to add yet another tax? Again, I don't see how this helps the Heritage of Maine Sporting Camps.

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It should also be pointed out there was no meeting to discuss the contents of this bill with the board of director's of the Maine Sporting Camp Association and nothing sent to members to get their feedback. A bill of this nature put forth by the association should have been vetted by the director's prior to submission as well as been sent to the membership.

Who is going to pay the cost to audit all of these new regulatory items. There is no possible way that auditing over 100 facilities to determine caretaker status, where their marketing is occurring and how much revenue they receive from various activities can be done without adding staff. This is a huge red flag and seems to shed some light on how State spending is rising at breakneck speed. There is a clear lack of understanding in the amount of work this bill would entail from a regulatory perspective.

Lastly, as a philanthropist who runs an organization dedicated to preserving Maine's outdoor heritage, I am personally mortified by the specific language attacking the entities that provide the greatest community benefit of all. Providing benefit to the community is what is needed most in underserved communities and to underserved populations. Anything that limits the abilities of 501c3 public benefit companies as determined by the United States of America is ludicrous.

Thank you for your time.

Ron Greco
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LD 1737

Due to client obligations, I may not be available to be online to testify. I will login to the hearing as soon as possible.