

To the Honorable Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Maine's identity is inseparable from its waters. Our "Vacationland" brand is not merely a slogan; it is a \$9.2 billion economic engine fueled by the clarity of our lakes and the health of our rivers. Today, a University of Maine study values our great ponds alone at \$14 billion. These waters are the bedrock of a tourism industry that supports 116,000 jobs—roughly 1 in 6 workers in our state.

However, this engine is under immediate threat. We are witnessing an escalation of environmental pressures:

**Economic Sensitivity to Water Quality:** Research shows that even a moderate decline in water clarity can reduce lake recreation value by \$33 million annually and slash shorefront property values by hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Rising Invasive Threats:** At least 123 Maine lakes are currently at risk for harmful algal blooms, and the spread of invasive aquatic plants threatens to permanently degrade the fishing and boating experiences that draw millions of visitors to Maine.

**Public Health & Infrastructure:** More than half of Maine's population relies on these lakes for drinking water. Degradation doesn't just hurt tourism; it risks multi-million dollar costs for new filtration plants, as seen with the \$35 million threat to Lake Auburn.

Protecting our water is not an "environmental" expense; it is a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers of Maine. In 2024, visitors saved every household in the Lakes & Mountains region an average of \$1,548 in taxes. If our water quality fails, that tax burden shifts directly back to our citizens.

We must act now to fund the protection of these resources. To do otherwise is to ignore the looming depreciation of our state's most valuable asset. Let us ensure that "Vacationland" remains a promise kept for future generations and a stable foundation for the Maine economy. Supporting LD 2141 will help protect Maine waters at no cost to the taxpayers.

On a personal note, for the past twenty years, I have been involved with other volunteers of the Torsey Pond Association in invasive aquatic plant prevention and water quality issues. Volunteers are working constantly to protect Maine waters. Please help us win this battle.

I strongly support LD 2141 and I hope you will too.

Respectfully,

Andrew Zuorski  
Torsey Pond Association  
Mount Vernon