



# Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Legislative Director, Maine Conservation Voters  
Neither For Nor Against LD 2212

*“An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”*

Before the Appropriations and Financial Services Committee  
February 19, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Services Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the legislative director for Maine Conservation Voters. MCV is a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 2212 *“An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”*.

The current supplemental budget includes funding for many important programs including funding for non-profit food banks and emergency heating assistance. It also funds staffing for agencies that do important work such as environmental permitting. However, Maine could do so much more to help its people by reforming our income tax brackets. A bill by Rep. Matlack, LD 229, would set up a more progressive income tax system by making those that can afford it pay their fair share. It is estimated that LD 229 could raise more than \$100 million in the upcoming biennium and over \$176 million in the following biennium, along with millions more to support municipal revenue sharing. With this increased revenue in the budget, the State could do so much to help the people of Maine. First, energy affordability. Maine families face some of the highest heating and

electricity costs in the country. Revenue generated from these types of progressive tax programs could help expand energy assistance programs, invest in weatherization, and support clean energy transitions that lower long-term costs. There could be money set aside in the budget for direct credits to electricity bills, providing real, tangible assistance to help Mainers with increased energy costs.

Another issue that impacts people across the state is paying state employees a living wage. Our public workforce keeps the state running. Yet many struggle to afford housing, childcare, and healthcare. Maine agencies are constantly dealing with staff turnover and lack of staffing because the State does not and cannot afford to pay state workers as much as they would make in the private sector. Chronic understaffing and turnover are not abstract problems; they delay services and increase burnout, leading to a lack of trust in government systems because they are not functioning correctly. And tied to this issue is also a lack of staffing for state agencies. Many state agencies don't replace staff that leave or programs aren't fully staffed to begin with, leading to longer wait times for benefits and services along with a lack of implementation and enforcement of important policies. For instance, the Safer Chemicals program under the Department of Environmental Protection only has 2 full time staff dedicated to the program. This means that important programs like the Kids Safe Products Act and the PFAS Products Act, both important toxics reductions policies passed with bipartisan support, are not getting implemented as quickly and as extensively as needed; leading to the people of Maine, particularly children, being exposed to toxic chemicals in everyday products that can lead to chronic and dangerous health issues. Because the DEP does not have the funding to enforce these programs, many companies that are violating these laws fall through the cracks. This is just one example of the many programs throughout the various state agencies.

Additionally, there are many land conservation programs that need to be funded to help protect the vital natural resources in Maine. Land for Maine's Future (LMF), one of the most popular land conservation programs that benefits all 16 counties, is chronically underfunded. The Maine Won't Wait climate action plan states that Maine needs to conserve 30% of its land to help mitigate the effects of climate change and fight biodiversity loss. LMF can help meet this goal. Additional funding from a progressive tax system could help provide funding to this important program that benefits our working forests and farmland, secures waterfront access for seafood harvesters, and ensures public access for outdoor recreation.

When considering the supplemental budget and ways to fund these important programs, we urge the committee to consider amending the budget to include important revenue increasing policies such as the one laid out in LD 229. Adding these revenue generating policies can help fund important programs and provide much-needed financial relief to the people of Maine.

Thank you.