



February 19, 2026

Honorable Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

My name is Wolfe Tone, and I serve as Executive Director of Maine Huts & Trails (MH&T), a nonprofit outdoor recreation and hospitality organization based in western Maine. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Part EE of LD 2212 - the transfer of \$700,000 from the Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund, Other Special Revenue Funds account within the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Maine Huts & Trails operates a backcountry experience and hospitality system in the High Peaks region of Franklin and Somerset Counties. We are located approximately 50 miles from the Canadian border and more than four hours from the major New England population centers. Our business model—like many rural tourism and hospitality enterprises—depends on coordinated public and private marketing investments to attract visitors from outside Maine.

Tourism is not incidental to our work; it is the economic engine that sustains rural jobs, trail stewardship, youth outdoor experiential programming, and year-round lodging and food service operations. Unlike businesses in urban or coastal markets, we cannot rely on drive-by traffic or dense local populations. We rely on destination marketing to reach guests in Boston, New York, Montreal, and beyond.

Over the past year, we have already experienced a sharp decline in Canadian visitation—historically an important segment of our winter guest base. With our proximity to Quebec and New Brunswick, cross-border travel has long been a meaningful contributor to winter occupancy. That market contraction has measurable impacts on revenue during our core hut-to-hut ski season. At the same time, increased costs—insurance, food, labor, utilities—have compressed margins across the hospitality sector.

In this environment, reducing Maine's coordinated tourism marketing capacity would have outsized impacts on rural operators like ours. Maine's destination marketing framework allows small and mid-sized organizations to leverage state-level brand recognition, cooperative advertising, digital campaigns, and international outreach that we could never replicate independently. Public marketing investment is not a subsidy; it is a multiplier. It allows rural businesses to amplify private marketing dollars and compete in a crowded, global travel marketplace.

For Maine Huts & Trails, every out-of-state visitor represents new dollars circulating in Maine's rural economy—at local gas stations, restaurants, gear suppliers, and other lodging establishments. Tourism spending in regions like ours supports year-round employment in communities that otherwise face limited economic diversification opportunities.

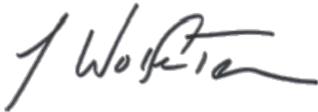
Part EE of LD 2212 risks undermining the very tools that enable rural hospitality businesses to survive and grow. If Maine reduces its ability to market itself effectively—especially in out-of-state and cross-border markets—the consequences will not be abstract. They will be felt in lower occupancy rates, fewer seasonal jobs, reduced local purchasing, and diminished economic resilience in rural communities.

Maine's brand is strong because it is consistently and strategically promoted. The state's tourism marketing investments enable small nonprofit and for-profit operators alike to reach audiences far beyond our geographic isolation. For organizations located a long way from major population centers and dependent on destination travelers, that partnership is essential.

I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose Part EE of LD 2212 and to preserve Maine's capacity to leverage public-private marketing resources that sustain rural tourism and hospitality enterprises.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wolfe Tone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Wolfe Tone
Executive Director

Wolfe Tone
Kingfield
LD 2212

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