

Chastity Raymond
Old Orchard Beach
LD 2212

To the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

This letter is to oppose Part EE of LD 2212, the Supplemental Budget, which would take \$700,000 out of Maine's Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund. I am writing you from a family owned and operated business located in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

As a family business, we do not have unlimited funds to promote ourselves and therefore rely on Maine's Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund to help direct visitors to our area and business. Given the decrease in Canadian visitors starting last year, local businesses have already seen a negative impact on revenue. We have worked hard to replace the Canadian business by pulling visitors from New England states, but we cannot do it alone. We heavily rely on state associations and funds to help keep our business afloat.

Removing \$700,000 from the Maine's Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund would mean a decrease in outside advertisement which would lead to decreased visitation. We have only six months to make enough money to keep operations going until the next season. Every reservation makes a difference, and could make the difference on whether we are able to continue operating for future years.

Not only does this affect us directly, but it also affects our community. Fewer reservations, reduced hours for employees, and less spending in our local community immediately impacts local businesses. Old Orchard Beach is one of the highest visited summer locations in Maine. It has been heartbreaking watching locally owned businesses shut down due to COVID and the Canadian visitor decrease in recent years. Taking these marketing funds would mean more businesses being pushed to the edge of shutting down.

For every \$1 invested in marketing, there is an estimated \$15-\$20 in visitor spending. Removing these funds would mean a decrease of \$10,500,000 - \$14,000,000 visitor spending in the state of Maine. That is a huge impact on Maine's economy and family owned businesses.

It is understood that Maine needs these funds to come from somewhere. That being said, The Tourism Marketing Fund was created in law in 2001 to ensure industry-generated revenue is reinvested directly into tourism promotion. Using these funds for unrelated purposes sets a bad precedent; and at that point, where does it end?

To close, Maine is called "Vacationland" for a reason. We pride ourselves on hospitality, food, and outside activities. It is one of, if not the main reasons why people come to visit Maine. Removing funds to continue promoting "Vacationland" will have a huge impact on local communities, family owned and operated businesses, and Maine's overall economy.

I send this testimony in hopes for the committee's continued consideration to remove or change this act.

Thank you for your time,
Chastity Raymond