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March 9, 2026

Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

State House, Augusta, Maine

RE: Opposition to Part EE of LD 2212 – Supplemental Budget Proposal

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, representing over 600 businesses in the greater Waterville region, strongly opposes **Part EE of LD 2212**. This proposal would divert **\$700,000** from the Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund, a fund fueled by the industry's own success, to unrelated budgetary needs.

Maine's competitive edge relies on the promise that 5% of meals and lodging tax revenue will be reinvested into promoting our state. Breaking this long-standing commitment is not just a policy shift; it is a direct threat to our local economies.

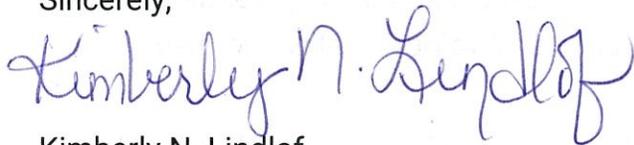
In the **Waterville and Mid-Maine region**, the impact of tourism is measurable and vital:

- **Regional Economic Driver:** Our local arts and culture sector alone is a powerhouse; a recent study of Waterville's nonprofit arts organizations showed they welcomed over **80,000 visitors** in a single year, generating more than **\$3 million in related spending** by patrons.
- **Attracting Outside Dollars:** More than **42% of arts and culture attendees** in Waterville come from outside Kennebec County, spending an average of **\$53.60 per person** per event. This influx of "new money" supports our local hospitality, retail, and service sectors.
- **A Proven ROI:** Statewide, the Maine Office of Tourism reports a return of **\$15–\$20 in visitor spending** for every \$1 invested in marketing. Cutting \$700,000 reduces this economic engine at a time when we need it most.

- **Breaking a Sacred Trust:** Since 2001, the Tourism Marketing Fund has ensured that revenue generated by tourism businesses is reinvested to keep visitors coming. Redirecting these funds sets a dangerous precedent that these industry-generated dollars are a "rainy day fund."
- **Vulnerability in the Market:** After a year where **Canadian visitation dropped to 4%** (down from 7% in 2024), we must reinforce our message. Stable, dedicated marketing is Maine's greatest strength against regional competitors.
- **Immediate Local Impact:** In mid-Maine, a decline in visitation is felt instantly through fewer reservations, reduced hours for local employees, and less spending in our communities.

Our members operate on the expectation that the state is a partner in their growth. We urge the Committee to reject Part EE and honor the commitment to reinvest tourism revenue back into the industry that generates it.

Sincerely,



Kimberly N. Lindlof
President & CEO
Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce

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