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Testimony of Rep. Tavis Hasenfus introducing
LD 164, An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Tavis Hasenfus, and I represent House District 57 and the communities of Readfield and Winthrop. I am here before you today as a cosponsor for **LD 164, An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund**.

Maine lakes have significant importance to me, and I strongly believe that the health of our lakes is paramount to the future of our state. I come from a district with approximately 10 great ponds and lakes. These lakes are cherished by residents and visitors alike. We also have one of the most at-risk lakes in the state for invasive aquatic species; Cobbossee Lake is threatened by an infestation of Eurasian water milfoil, variable leaf milfoil and frog bit.

These infestations, if left untreated, will turn our favorite swimming, paddling and boating areas into floating carpets of unnavigable weeds.

Not only do these infestations, algae blooms and other water quality problems jeopardize Maine's natural beauty, but they have the potential to wreak havoc on our economy.

A large portion of municipal revenue comes from assessing property taxes on the many waterfront properties here in Maine. However, we have seen the values of lakefront properties located on heavily infested lakes decline significantly. This not only harms the property owners, but it harms the municipalities and citizens that rely on the property tax revenue to fund essential services.

In Vermont, a milfoil infestation decreased lakefront property tax values by an estimated 16%¹. Of more concern is the impact infestations can have on Maine's lake recreation industry that brings in more than a billion dollars annually².

If we allow our lakes to fall victim to invasive species and pollution, we will lose this vital income which so many of our rural communities rely on during the summer.

Many of these local communities recognize the importance of their lakes and have created nonprofits and associations designed specifically to protect the water quality of their lakes. Just last year, over one million dollars was raised by community members to address water quality issues on Cobbossee Lake.

The effort is being made locally, but our communities cannot do this alone.

This bill injects a substantial amount of money into a long-underfunded lake protection fund. This will spur significant fundraising efforts by allocating money to match the funds communities raise on their own. The beauty of this bill is that it rewards those communities that are willing to put in the work. These community organizations are the experts in how best to keep their waters clean, and reinvesting into the lake and restoration fund is one way the state can be a good partner.

Maine's fresh water quality is highest in the country³. I am extremely proud of this, but if we fail to invest in our magnificent natural resources we may not be able to pass them on to the next generation. I ask my colleagues on this committee to vote in favor of this bill, which will help keep our lakes clean.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me.

1. Zhang C, Boyle KJ (2010) The effect of an aquatic invasive species (Eurasian watermilfoil) on lakefront property values. *Ecological Economics* 70: 394–404. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar_lookup?journal=Ecological+Economics&title=The+effect+of+an+aquatic+invasive+species+\(Eurasian+watermilfoil\)+on+lakefront+property+values&author=C+Zhang&author=KJ+Boyle&volume=70&publication_year=2010&pages=394-404&](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_lookup?journal=Ecological+Economics&title=The+effect+of+an+aquatic+invasive+species+(Eurasian+watermilfoil)+on+lakefront+property+values&author=C+Zhang&author=KJ+Boyle&volume=70&publication_year=2010&pages=394-404&)
2. <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/sports/outdoors/outdoor-recreation-industry-maine-billions-economy/97-7a510e24-5f69-4f73-b47e-c0316c9ac198>
3. <https://www.mdf.org/measures-of-growth/water-quality/>