



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Bill Bridgeo introducing*

## **LD 797, Resolve, to Authorize the Conveyance of Real Property to the Capitol Area Recreation Association**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*

I am Bill Bridgeo and I represent House District #60 – the east side of Augusta. I am here to speak in support of LD 797 – a Resolve that would authorize the conveyance of real property to the Capital Area Recreation Association (CARA).

Almost fifty years ago, the State of Maine granted a 99-year lease to an Augusta-based volunteer organization whose mission was – and continues to be – to provide high quality youth outdoor sports facilities for the children of Augusta and surrounding communities. They incorporated as CARA.

The property in question was originally part of the Augusta Mental Health Institute's (AMHI) expansive farm, directly across Hospital Street from the hospital grounds (what we now refer to as the East Side Campus of the State's capitol complex). The road providing access to the former farm property and now the CARA complex still bears the name of the farm function it accessed – the Piggery Road. (About the same time that the State leased CARA its property, it also leased the remainder of the old farm – also for a nominal amount – to another not-for-profit, which led to the creation of the wonderful Viles Arboretum).

In the years since CARA was formed and acquired their part of the old farm, they have created an amazing complex of baseball, softball, basketball, soccer and lacrosse fields and related facilities (even including a horseshoe club complex) that, in my forty-year career as a city manager, I never saw the likes of.

Everything they have done has been accomplished through the work of volunteers (a number of whom are here today) and donated funds. They want to continue their good work and to improve the complex to serve the ever growing and evolving needs of the children of the Greater Augusta area, to facilitate fund-raising and energize on-going volunteerism and, frankly, provide for peace of mind knowing that their efforts are permanently accruing to the benefit of the community.

District 60: Part of Augusta

CARA is comfortable with protective clauses in a deed from the State that would prevent the land from ever being mortgaged or sold by CARA, or used for purposes not related to their mission. The State derives no revenue from the lease now so the request is that the sale price to CARA – with appropriate deed restrictions – be for one dollar.

I believe that the State is amenable to this proposal and can speak to it today. Representatives of CARA are here as well, led by their Board President and Augusta's Mayor, Mark O'Brien. I am happy to answer any questions though I suspect the others I mentioned will have answers that are more complete. Thank you.