



Maine Coast Heritage Trust

A Statewide Land Conservation Organization

Testimony in Support of LD 596

An Act to Exempt Certain Conservation Lots from Municipal Subdivision Review

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jeff Romano. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust in support of LD 596. Joining our testimony are twenty-eight land trusts from around the state.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust conserves and stewards Maine's coastal lands and islands for their renowned scenic beauty, ecological value, outdoor recreational opportunities, and contribution to community well-being. We provide statewide conservation leadership through our work with land trusts, coastal communities, and other partners. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 150,000 acres in Maine.

MCHT also works in partnership with more than 80 land trusts in Maine including the twenty-eight organizations that have joined this testimony. Collectively, our state's land trust community has conserved more than 2.8 million acres protecting working landscapes, enhancing public access for traditional uses, and preserving valuable wildlife habitats.

Although not likely to be used often, the targeted exemption in LD 596 is a commonsense change to Maine's Municipal Subdivision Law. In short, it will provide conservation-minded landowners with a new incentive to permanently conserve a portion of their property in those instances when doing so would be the third division in five years, thus triggering the time-consuming and costly requirements of subdivision review.

This proposed change is consistent with the purposes of the state's subdivision law, as the factors planning boards must assess when weighing subdivisions include pollution, erosion, sewage disposal, impacts to ground water, and a variety of other considerations generally attributable to development activities. On the other hand, rather than contributing to these concerns land conservation often mitigates their impacts.

More than two decades ago the state identified the benefit of enacting a conservation exemption for subdivision review within Maine's unorganized townships. This law has worked well in the northern half of the state for over twenty years. LD 596 would simply extend a similar, but stronger provision to all property owners in Maine.

We encourage the committee to vote ought to pass on LD 596. This bill will not only encourage conservation but result in savings that would be better spent on taking care of the protected properties for the benefit and enjoyment of Maine people.

Kennebunkport Conservation Trust
Royal River Conservation Trust
Blue Hill Heritage Trust
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Midcoast Conservancy
Presumpscot Regional Land Trust
Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
7 Lakes Alliance
Peaks Island Land Preserve
Mount A to the Sea Conservation Collaborative
Boothbay Region Land Trust
Friends of Wilson Pond
Mahoosuc Land Trust
Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust

Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
Forest Society of Maine
The Conservation Fund
Scarborough Land Trust
Kennebec Land Trust
The Nature Conservancy
Appalachian Trail Land Trust
Three Rivers Land Trust
Western Foothills Land Trust
Kittery Land Trust
Bangor Land Trust
Maine Farmland Trust
Cape Elizabeth Land Trust
Great Works Land Trust