



SAM-ILA

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Testimony in Support

LD 1285, An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Presented by David Trahan, Executive Director of the SAM-Institute for Legislative Action
Monday, April 10, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pleucker, members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is David Trahan and I am testifying in support of *LD 1285, An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program*.

First, I would like to thank Senator Black for sponsoring LD 1285 ^{on} SAM-ILA's behalf and our partners in this effort that will follow me. Purchasing and conserving public land can be and is often a lengthy and complicated process. Land transactions can take years to complete and when relying on publicly approved bonds, sales to the State can be a risky business. We all know the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program has followed a very rocky path over the last decade, we are trying to end this unnecessary turmoil by establishing funding for the last two years of the Mills'

administration and more excitingly, for the next decade. Jeff Romano, from Maine Coast Heritage Trust, will give more details on that collaborative effort in a moment.

This bill establishes a place holder of \$10 million a year for the Land for Maine's Future Program in the baseline of the next biennial budget. After discussions with the administration and key members of the Legislature we ask the committee to amend this bill, instead, to place this \$10 million request over two years in the budget cascade, a similar funding process as used in the last biennial budget negotiation.

The SAM-ILA, in partnership with a coalition of groups, helped to negotiate a four-year, \$40 million dollar appropriation to LMF, in addition, the same group changed the LMF Program to prioritize the purchase and management of deer wintering areas that benefit over 50 wildlife species and the critical wildlife habitat necessary to sustain them. One of the first land purchases exceeded 6,000 acres and I am aware of several much larger under discussion. Conservation projects of this size take years to negotiate, fund and complete. In order to bring stability and confidence for large landowners, to create complex conservation projects, long term funding is essential. This bill is a bridge to the future for this important and popular program. Thank you.