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Testimony in Support of LD 1156
An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Promote the Design, Development and
Maintenance of Trails for Outdoor Recreation and Active Transportation
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Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Denise Clavette, and I currently serve as Director of Economic and Community Development for the Town of South Berwick. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of LD 1156,

LD1156 speaks near and dear to my heart, as I have served over 30 years in municipal government, with over 20 years as a director of parks and recreation in the communities of Kennebunk, Fort Kent, Essex Junction, Vermont, and the City of Portland. In addition, the last 10 plus years, I've served in economic development director roles in Brunswick, Yarmouth, Saco and now in South Berwick.

I urge you to support this bill that would support investments for active transportation, connectivity, and outdoor recreation. With \$30 million in funding, and the ability to leverage at least another \$6 million in matching funds, this bill will help place Maine on the map for investing in its trail systems and interconnectivity through design, development, and maintenance.

I am particularly pleased that this bond would include funding for repairs and maintenance of existing trails, a much needed area of investment that we shouldn't neglect.

Creating dynamic, connected communities, promoting a high quality of life, and catalyzing economic development are critical for our communities in Maine. Interconnected systems of trails and roadways (through streets, bike lanes, sidewalks) increase property values, attract business development, and are a key component for workforce development. By investing in trails, we can create linkages among our homes, work, schools, shopping, and recreation destinations at a fraction of the cost of road infrastructure investments, while promoting a healthy environment, healthy people through mobility, and a healthy economy.

I agree with those who believe that investing in our trails can be very positive for the image of Maine as a destination to visit, and to live.

On a personal note, I grew up in a small community, of less than 200 people, on Daigle Pond, now known as New Canada. I took for granted how many snowmobiles rode on the pond in front of my house, and had access to the many farmlands behind my home. I jumped on my bike many summer days, rode 8 miles to spend my allowance money at the "Tastee Freeze", only to continue biking another 20 miles to do the circuit along lakes and back to my home. I snowshoed, Nordic skied on many trails, hopped on neighbor's snowmobiles, you name it. Just thought everyone had this! Fort Kent had great sidewalks, trails, rail to trail systems and more.

Later in my career, I helped the Ft. Kent town manager write a MaineDOT grant to develop a trail system along the international border along the dike developed by the Army Corps of Engineers – to the tune of \$850,000. This was a huge boost to the community. If anyone has been to Fort Kent and the northern Maine region, lately, it is easy to note that it is home to some of the best snowmobile trails throughout the country, also hosting the famed annual Can-Am Dog Sled races. All of these and more contribute significantly to the Maine economy.

Aging in place, ability to keep seniors moving, ability to walk and connect to retail and businesses is key and critical. Connecting back to a personal level, I was so happy to see my 80-year-old Mom (at the time) on the front page of the Bangor Daily News. She was walking with her girlfriends on a converted rail to trail system in Fort Kent.

Raising families in Maine, enjoying the Eastern Trail and other trail systems are key and critical. My daughter and her husband purchased a home in Old Orchard Beach because it bordered the Eastern Trail. Today they use the trail every day with their two children, walking, jogging, and biking.

At the end of the day, supporting LD1156 is key and critical to advancing Maine's trails and economic development. It represents an investment that will pay dividends for years and generations to come. I urge the Committee and the Maine Legislature to approve this bond, so that it may be on the November ballot. If you do, I am confident that Maine people would vote overwhelmingly in support of this investment, because we all love trails.

Thank you for this opportunity to share these comments.