

The logo for the Environmental Priorities Coalition features the text "Environmental Priorities Coalition" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: "Environmental" on the top line, "Priorities" on the middle line, and "Coalition" on the bottom line. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic of a mountain range with three peaks, rendered in a light gray color against a dark background.

**Environmental  
Priorities  
Coalition**

Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition

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”*

Before the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

April 27, 2023

Good day Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Beth Ahearn and I offer testimony on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC). The EPC is a partnership of thirty-seven conservation, environmental, and public health organizations who unify around a common agenda every year. The EPC represents over 120,000 members in Maine who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that depend upon a healthy environment. 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” is one of the priority bills for our coalition this year. Thank you to Rep. Fay for sponsoring this priority legislation.

LD 1156 will establish a Maine Trails Bond for outdoor recreation and active transportation. Maine has the potential to be a top-tier state in the nation with multi-use trails that support activities that contribute to our economy, environment, and quality of life. In every corner of the state, Maine trails are a critical resource for connecting Maine people and visitors with the natural world and for reaching destinations to work and play.

During the pandemic, more people than ever discovered Maine trails for hiking, biking, snowmobiling, skiing, commuting, and other activities. Trails are an essential component of Maine’s \$3 billion outdoor recreation economy, which

supports 41,000 jobs. Snowmobiling alone generates \$460 million in direct spending in Maine and supports 2,200 jobs. Annual direct and indirect spending from snowmobiling exceeds \$600 million. According to the National Association of Realtors, nearby trails and greenways raise property values by an average of 3-5% -- and sometimes upwards of 15%.

Maine has a huge need for investment in trail design, construction, and maintenance. Although Maine has many exceptional and diverse trails, trail groups and communities have identified a large backlog of maintenance projects that need attention. Funding also is needed to build trails that are accessible to individuals across the full range of abilities. New trails could support active transportation, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Existing state, federal, and private funding is insufficient to make Maine a nationally recognized destination for trails.

A Maine Trails Bond will strengthen Maine's economy and help protect our environment. A \$30 million Maine Trails Bond would provide grants to nonprofits, municipalities, and other divisions of government statewide to support non-motorized, motorized, and multi-use trails. Funding would be distributed over a 4-year period, and applicants would be required to demonstrate at least 20% in matching contributions. Funding would be managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL), which has experience managing the federal Recreation Trails Program. BPL would coordinate with the Department of Transportation for any grant applications that help advance the Maine State Active Transportation Plan.

We urge you to unanimously support LD 1156. Please invest in Maine trails to strengthen our communities, economy, and quality of life. Thank you for your time and attention.