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*Testimony of Representative Jessica Fay Presenting*

### **LD 212, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Upgrade Municipal Culverts at Stream Crossings**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Jessica Fay, representing House District 86. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 212, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Upgrade Municipal Culverts at Stream Crossings”** for your consideration.

This bill would authorize a general fund bond to finance a competitive grant program that matches local funding for the upgrade of municipal culverts at stream crossings. This bond is crucial for Maine's rural communities, where aging, deteriorating culverts often go unnoticed until there is a failure of that infrastructure. Like me, many of you represent small, rural towns and regularly deal with the significant impact that extreme weather events have on our constituents when culverts fail. A wash out is more than an inconvenience—these failures of key infrastructure hinder economic productivity and quality of life.

This program will prioritize culverts that need upgrading or replacement, based on available stream survey data, statewide prioritization for aquatic connectivity, and the presence of priority watersheds of salmon, alewives, and other diadromous fishes. The program will also ensure that culverts meet key Department of Environmental Protection design standards, and meet or exceed the Department of Transportation's 50-year flood standard. By doing so, we will be ensuring these culverts can withstand the test of time and any severe weather events that may occur.

In addition to that emphasis on maximizing this investment, the program funded by this bond legislation will also focus on project cost-effectiveness. The program will provide funds to cover only a portion of the costs associated with a proposed project. This approach allows the program to assist in the completion of as many vetted projects as possible, while incentivizing municipal stakeholders to commit their own resources, too.

District 86: Casco, Frye Island, Raymond and Part of Poland

Funding more culvert upgrade and modernization projects will also contribute to reducing the severity of flooding to municipalities, improving stormwater management within the proposed project area, and advancing potential goals around fish and wildlife habitat.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support the passage of this LD 212 and its proposed municipal culvert program, which will make a significant difference in our rural communities. This program will provide much-needed support to upgrade essential infrastructure that is critical to rural communities. Thank you for your time and attention.