



Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

May 22, 2023

**RE: LD 1969, An Act to Expand the Use of Funds to Support Land Conservation**

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1969, An Act to Expand the Use of Funds to Support Land Conservation, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers. Maine Audubon supports this legislation as an essential strategy to strengthen Land for Maine's Future (LMF) for the long term.

Established in 1987, LMF is Maine's most successful land conservation program. The program is responsible for protecting more than 600,000 acres across all of Maine's 16 counties, including more than 325,000 acres of working farms, forests, and waterfronts, miles and miles of recreational trails, and important wildlife habitat. Time and time again, LMF has demonstrated that it is worthy of Maine's investment.

LD 1969 is a first step toward stabilizing and strengthening this program. The bill does this in the following ways:

- By directing current and future funding into a new LMF Trust Fund, which would maintain LMF dollars separate from other state dollars. This would have the benefit of keeping all investment income in the Trust Fund and in turn available to use for the program's purposes.
- By creating the "Conservation Land Management Fund". This fund, nestled within the LMF Trust Fund, would give the legislature the authority to invest future funds toward improving recreational infrastructure and wildlife habitat management on existing conservation lands.

The LMF Trust Fund could be fed by bond monies – the way that the program has been funded to date – as well as through contributions from private and public sources. In other words, through yet-identified dedicated revenues. Identifying and securing consistent, predictable funding is crucial to the future success of this program. Maine Audubon looks forward to

working collaboratively with conservation partners to identify that source or sources. Until then, LD 1969 will serve as a repository for the funds allocated to the program by the 130th Legislature, so that those funds can both grow and be spent to achieve Maine's conservation goals.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge the Committee to support LD 1969.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eliza Donoghue".

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.  
Director of Advocacy