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Testimony of Rep. Anne Graham in support of
LD 209, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee, I am Rep. Anne Graham and I serve the communities of North Yarmouth and Gray in House District 105. I am here to testify in strong support of **LD 209, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor**.

Please allow me to tell you a bit of the story of my family when we moved to North Yarmouth 30 years ago. We were fortunate to buy a piece of land and build a house at the end of a small road next to the Royal River. My husband and I and two young sons moved in and made North Yarmouth our home. Our road crossed railroad tracks just after the intersection of North Road and we were excited to learn that the “Ski Train” would travel on it to Sunday River. Alas, we never saw that train and the tracks have been unused and in disrepair ever since. The crossing was made of wood and tore up our tires as we crossed. Sometimes people would walk on the tracks (but not me with my fear of twisting weak ankles). I often thought of how cool it would be if you could walk or bike on the tracks. This bill will give my family and many others the opportunity to walk, ride bikes or cross country ski on a quiet and beautiful trail.

My son, Hunter, has gotten into the habit of riding his bicycle long distances. He rides along North Road towards RT 1, into Portland and then to Cape Elizabeth (around 37 miles!). He usually doesn't tell me when he rides because he knows I will worry about his safety on those high traffic roads. You see, North Road extends from Yarmouth, connects with Mill Road and then connects to RT 115 into Gray. It is heavily traveled by commuters and large trucks who use it as a pass-through from the Maine Turnpike and RT 26 to RT 1 and I-295. I can honestly say that one takes their life in their hands when they take their children or their dog for a walk. The speed limit is 45 miles per hour, so people are often traveling 55 miles per hour or faster. If the tracks were converted to a trail, families could walk and ride safely, and this mom would breathe a little easier about her bicycling son.

Please know that this is a proposal to use this unused rail *until* rail becomes a real possibility. I have deep respect and appreciation for the role that rail has played in building our country. If not for the rail that extended from Boston to Bangor, I would not be here. My Dad traveled by train

from his residency in Boston to his residency in Bangor. He met my Mom, married, became a well-respected physician and they had five children. I believe rail is an important part of our transportation past and future. For now, let's use this unused rail line for the health and wellbeing of our communities today.

You will surely hear NIMBY testimony. I think one way to assuage concerns is to limit access to the proposed trail to only pedestrians, bicyclers and skiers; activities that specifically promote health and wellness should be the priority.

I am an unabashed YIMBY and I am confident that I speak for the majority of my constituents in that regard. I, and those coming behind me, greatly appreciate your time and attention to this wonderful idea which further exemplifies our unofficial motto: Maine the Way Life Should Be.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.