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Testimony in Support of LD 1998
An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

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Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Troy Jackson. I have the honor of serving as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent the good people of Aroostook County. I'm here today to introduce LD 1998, *An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum*. With this bill, I'm hopeful that we can preserve this rapidly deteriorating historic building for years to come.

Built between 1947-49, the Loring Arch Hangar in Limestone was once the largest arch roof structure in the entire country. It was the first structure specifically built as part of the U.S. Strategic Air Command's mission to deter enemy forces and capable of maintaining two B-36 bombers. The arch spans 340 feet and is 314 feet long. The interior floor space is almost 2.5 acres.¹ The building is an historic treasure and if repurposed would also bring economic benefit to the area.

Since the closure of the Loring Air Force Base in 1994, this historic building has deteriorated at a rapid pace. A building that some call "an engineering marvel" is now in serious disrepair. For years, there has been talk about revitalizing and repurposing the building. Unfortunately, without the funds the talk has never amounted to any action and time is running out.

By transferring the ownership of the Arch Hangar to the Loring Air Museum, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we can put the building on the National Historic Registry, where it belongs, and secure critical grants to make the appropriate repairs. If we don't act now, the condition of the building will worsen, making it more likely that the building will have to eventually be torn down.

¹ <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/ME-01-003-0090>

I want to be clear that my intention with this bill is not to be critical of the great work of the Loring Development Authority. Rather, it is reflective of the challenges maintaining the former base and the need to tap into all available resources. If we do not transfer the building to the Loring Air Museum, then I would urge the state to appropriate the necessary funds to make these critical repairs.

The proposed amendment is an attempt to facilitate this transfer. I ask you to consider LD 1998 as a positive maneuver to show our respect for the past and our hope for the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions