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Senator, District 5

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in support of

LD 2149, An Act to Exempt Seasonal Volunteer Ski Patrollers and Seasonal Volunteer Ski Ambassadors and Hosts at Ski Areas from the Minimum Wage Laws

January 23, 2024

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee. I am Senator Russell Black and I proudly represent the good citizens of Senate District 5, which includes multiple towns in Franklin and Somerset Counties, and the towns of Rome and Vienna in Kennebec Counties. I also represent two ski areas within my district – Sugarloaf and Titcomb Mountain. I am pleased to be here today as a cosponsor of and to speak in favor of ***LD 2149, An Act to Exempt Seasonal Volunteer Ski Patrollers and Seasonal Volunteer Ski Ambassadors and Hosts at Ski Areas from the Minimum Wage Laws.***

On behalf of Maine's 17 ski areas, this proposal would allow Maine's volunteer ski patrollers, now numbering more than 250 individuals, to continue our state's long-standing heritage of assisting skiers and snowboarders with on-mountain medical treatment and transport, as well as playing a vital role in ensuring overall public safety at ski areas both on and off the slopes.

Maine has a long tradition of utilizing volunteer ski patrollers as a part of mountain safety. Since the opening of Maine's first ski area more than 80 years ago, volunteer ski patrollers have contributed thousands of hours of their own time and money to obtain and maintain medical certifications through the National Ski Patrol. These volunteers freely give their time because of their love of this snow sport, and their interest in giving back to their local communities.

The importance of volunteer ski patrol stretches beyond Maine's borders and the New England region. Their reach even extended to the White House back in 1980 when President Jimmy Carter signed a Congressional Charter honoring the selfless volunteers of the National Ski Patrol - encompassing nearly 18,000 volunteer patrollers nationwide. Sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy, this federal law praised these volunteers and sought "to promote, in every way, patriotic, scientific, and educational, public safety in skiing, by such means as the formation of volunteer local ski patrols consisting of competent skiers trained in medical first aid for the purpose of preventing ski accidents and rendering speedy assistance to individuals sustaining accidents."

Because our ski areas are located in rural areas of the state, volunteer ski patrollers play a fundamental role in assisting with on-mountain medical care and transport, chairlift evacuations, hazard relief, and guest safety. Ski patrollers come from a broad variety of educational and occupational backgrounds, but they all go through similar basic medical training. Volunteer ski