

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Brynne Robbins. I'm a student of environmental policy and government at Colby College and the Chair of Communications for the Parker Pond Association in Vienna.

During the past few summers, I've worked as both a boat inspector and invasive plant patroller in the 30 Mile River Watershed, which as of this past year, has two confirmed invasive species, a variable leaf milfoil infestation on Androscoggin lake and a swollen bladderwort infestation on Tilton Pond. Through my experience with invasive plant infestations, it's clear that nonprofits such as 30 Mile are doing all they possibly can to combat them. For smaller infestations, this includes plant patrolling by boat every day in the summer, and relying on Surface Use Restrictions to prevent boat traffic. Localized eradication efforts are rapidly becoming stretched as thin as they can manage; just four years ago, there were no known infestations in this watershed, where there are now two. Many other organizations are dealing with increased demand on limited resources as more infestations are discovered. Furthermore, severe infestations often require costly eradication treatments, such as herbicide and suction removal.

As we learn more about the impact of these plants on ecosystems, regulations that keep up will help ensure that the countless hours of mitigation work done by Mainers isn't in vain. An incredible amount of work is done by volunteers and employees of lake and watershed associations, largely funded by donations. However, while communities all over the state have shown their willingness to work, the efficacy of these programs is limited by funding and the quality of the regulations governing waterbody use. Maine's government and environmental protection programs have a responsibility to provide the best possible resources and regulations, giving implementation efforts the best chance of success. We have the science, and Mainers have stepped up with the passion to fight. Please ensure that after so much hard work, the state holds up their end of the bargain.

I don't need to tell you that infestations on lakes harm property values, that Maine's essential economic role as a summer vacationland paradise depends on the quality of our natural places, or that it's infinitely more difficult to remove a plant than to prevent it from entering a body of water. Maine's commitment to protecting our waterways makes our state an example of effective action and many healthy ecosystems. It is imperative, then, that we do not give up now. Although we have slowed the progress of these invasives considerably, every new infestation puts strain on already-stretched nonprofit removal efforts such as the milfoil in Androscoggin Lake. The passage of LD 2141 will ensure that the partnership between state and nonprofit efforts remains in balance. We simply cannot afford to give up now. Thank you for your time.