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Testimony of Rep. Maureen Terry in support of

**LD 2164, An Act to Establish the Maine-Ireland Trade Commission and Improve
Collaboration with Ireland**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business*

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and esteemed colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, I am Rep. Maureen Terry, representing part of Gorham in House District 108. I am very happy to offer testimony this afternoon in strong support of **LD 2164, An Act to Establish the Maine-Ireland Trade Commission and Improve Collaboration with Ireland.**

Maine and Ireland share a remarkable history that dates back centuries. From the first Irish settlers who arrived on these shores seeking a new beginning, to the countless generations that have followed, our connection runs deep. It is a connection built on shared values and a spirit of resilience that has defined both the people of Ireland and Mainers.

Be it the world of politics and public service, the arts, business or academia, Mainers of Irish descent have excelled and brought recognition to our shared heritage. One well-known individual who played a pivotal role in fostering this shared friendship is the esteemed George Mitchell, a proud Mainer with Irish roots. Senator Mitchell's tireless efforts in the Northern Ireland peace process exemplify the power of diplomacy and the potential for positive collaboration.

But our relationship with our Irish brothers and sisters goes beyond politics. For over three decades, the Irish American Club has celebrated that shared heritage and has worked to preserve and promote Irish-American culture, history and community in Maine. From music to sports to dance, Irish culture in Maine today is strong. But there is still room to strengthen these ties, and in particular, to deepen our economic relations. This bill would help achieve that.

Establishing a bilateral trade commission with Ireland is not a novel idea. Several other states have already adopted or are exploring similar agreements; and this makes sense. The United States and Ireland have one of the most robust trade relationships in the world. Ireland represents the ninth largest source of foreign direct investment to the U.S. and many high-tech firms, such as Google and Facebook, base their European operations in Ireland. Since 2015, Ireland also has become an important research and development center for U.S. firms in Europe. More than 900 U.S. companies already have offices in Ireland, providing a crucial opportunity for those companies to access the European Union market.¹

After visiting our colleagues and counterparts in Ireland over the summer, it has become abundantly clear that now more than ever, Mainers will benefit from deeper economic ties with Ireland. We already share so much, aside from our rich histories, including a love of beer, strong economic roots in agriculture and aquaculture, and burgeoning biotech and banking industries. But there is still so much we have to gain and share with each other.

I urge you to support this measure, and I am eager to see what a commitment to our mutual goals and investments can deliver for both of our communities.

¹ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-ireland/>