



P.O. BOX 513 | PORTLAND, ME 04112 | 207.464.0017 | MAINEOUTDOORBRANDS.COM

Testimony in Support of LD 2191

**An Act To Provide Relief To Small Businesses Affected By Severe
Weather-related Events**

February 13, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. My name is Jenny Kordick, and I serve as Executive Director of Maine Outdoor Brands. I'm here today in support of LD 2191 and want to thank you for considering this important bill to provide relief to Maine businesses impacted by recent severe weather events.

Maine Outdoor Brands (MOB) is an alliance of Maine based outdoor companies united in their desire to strengthen our state's \$3.3 billion outdoor recreation economy. MOB is committed to seeing our outdoor product, service, and retail brands thrive, and today has over 180 members that are a part of the mission, the majority of which are small businesses.

As you can imagine, the outdoor industry is uniquely threatened by severe weather events. Our success as an industry is dependent on our customers and clients being able to access recreation areas for boating, fishing, camping, hunting, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling and more. In almost any scenario, storms and flooding result in cancelled trips, and in worst case scenarios severe weather can cause millions of dollars of damage to outdoor recreation assets. Unfortunately, with these recent storms we've seen higher level impacts and are still assessing the damage.

We hope the program established by this legislation will be able to offset some of the costs to repair and rebuild critical outdoor recreation infrastructure, as well as provide relief to outdoor business owners who saw significant losses from closures and cancellations. We know that outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver and closely connected to many businesses across Maine. Friends and families who travel to ski or hike or snowmobile are also likely staying somewhere local and eating at local restaurants, and we want to see those businesses impacted getting back on their feet soon too.

Relatedly, Maine Outdoor Brands has also been advocating for the Maine Trails Bond, which would provide funding for the development and maintenance of multi-use trails around the state. The need for trail repair just skyrocketed after these recent storms, so we would also implore the legislature to consider dedicated funding for trails in this context as well.

The unfortunate reality is we will likely see more severe storms going forward. As we repair and rebound from these recent storms, we should also rethink how we plan, design, and manage recreation infrastructure and facilities to be as resilient as possible for future storms.

I will close by noting that Maine is a national leader in the outdoor industry – we're one of the top states in the country in the value outdoor recreation has added to statewide GDP. The outdoor industry employs more than 32,000 people in Maine. This is why we feel urgency to support our businesses and infrastructure that has been impacted.

Thank you.