

Lakes Environmental Association

Protecting Maine's lakes since 1970

February 6, 2025

Re: Opposition to LD 173: "An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements"

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

My name is Colin Holme and I am the Executive Director of the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA). Our organization has over 1300 members and a direct service area that covers 41 lakes in the upper Sebago Lake Region of western Maine. We regularly monitor the lakes in our service area, provide school and adult based watershed education, and land use planning services. Every year, we hire, train, and manage around 35 Courtesy Boat Inspectors who look for and remove invasive aquatic plants at our boat launches. Additionally, we have a team of 15 divers, 3 suction harvester boats and spend \$160,000-\$200,000 annually on removal of invasive milfoil in Sebago Lake, Long Lake, Brandy Pond, the Songo River and Sebago Cove.

In the last legislative session, the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife supported a bill to increase the fee structure for the *Lake and River Protection Sticker*, which funds the work to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species in Maine's lakes. I am writing today because the *Lake and River Protection Sticker* fee is tied in with the boat registration process.

Canoes, kayaks, and rowboats without motors are already exempt from the registration process and from purchasing a *Lake and River Protection* sticker. Although this proposed bill does not explicitly exempt any boats from having to purchase a *Lake and River Protection Sticker*, without the need to register a boat, the owner would have to take an additional step to purchase this sticker on their own. For this reason, we expect that less boats will end up purchasing this sticker and supporting the important programs to control and prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species.

If this bill is enacted, it will also result in less revenue for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, who help to keep Maine's waters safe, open to the public, and free of invasive species.

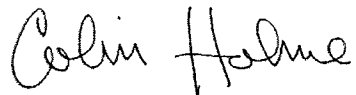
Most alarming is that this proposed exemption likely will be very broadly applied. Many smaller and medium sized aluminum, fiberglass, and wood boats have oar locks and could easily be considered row boats even though the primary propulsion is an outboard engine. This will add to regulatory confusion and possible future litigation.



Lastly, a 100 hp engine is a large and powerful motor. This is a very high threshold and it seems inappropriate to exempt boats of this caliber from the state's boat registration process.

Please help protect our lakes by voting "ought not to pass" on LD 173.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colin Holme".

Colin Holme
Executive Director
Lakes Environmental Association