

**Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 173**  
**An Act to Exempt Certain Watercraft from Registration Requirements**

*Submitted to Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee*

*February 10, 2025*



Good afternoon, Chair Baldacci, Chair Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee.

My name is Susan Gallo, and I am the Executive Director of Maine Lakes. Our membership organization includes more than 6,000 supporters, followers, and volunteers as well as 95 Lake Associations and their thousands of members. We are dedicated to our mission of promoting, protecting, and enhancing lake water quality and habitat, and of preserving the ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of Maine's lakes for everyone.

**Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak in opposition to LD 173.** This bill exempts canoes, kayaks, and rowboats with up to 100 horsepower motors from boat registration requirements. While initially this may seem like a benign exemption, we have grave concerns about the unintended consequences to Maine's lakes.

**Loss of revenue that supports important lake protection programs at IFW:** As you know, boat registration fees are put to good use, paying for vital services from the state. With no clear definition of a "rowboat", and with the high horsepower limit, we are concerned that many larger boats equipped with oarlocks could classify themselves as "rowboats". This bill opens the door for many types of boats, perhaps most boats in Maine, to be exempt from registration requirements. The Department would not only lose significant registration fee revenue but also additional funds from the Coast Guard for boat registrations. The loss of revenue would have serious consequences for the department's lake protection work, consequences that would affect boaters across the state.

**Loss of revenue from the Lake and River Protection Sticker program:** Even though we understand the registration exemption would still require boat owners to purchase a Lake and River Protection Sticker, there will be little incentive or easy avenue for that to happen. Other boats exempt from registration (those participating in races, regattas, and

water ski exhibitions) are all part of organized events that have oversight and mechanisms to distribute Lake and River Protection Stickers to participants. Exempting individual boaters who are not part of an organized group leaves them very likely to skip the purchase of a Sticker, resulting in decreased revenue that funds important invasive species risk reduction work, including Courtesy Boat Inspection programs and invasive removal work, both essential to reducing the spread of invasive species.

**There may be suggestions to limit horsepower or attempts to narrow who might qualify for an exemption from registration.** Motors are a primary vector for invasive species spread. Small motors, on small boats like canoes and kayaks, may have even greater potential to spread invasives as they are better able to get to shallow water where invasive species typically thrive and are more likely to fragment and get caught in propellers.

**All motorized boats should be subject to registration fees that contribute to lake protection, enforcement, and boater services. We urge the committee to maintain existing boat registration standards and vote no on this bill.**