



Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

February 12, 2025

**RE: LD 296, An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection,  
Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund**

Dear Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Director of Advocacy. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 296, *An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection, Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund*.

Healthy lakes and ponds are essential to Maine wildlife and Maine’s economy. For Common Loons, clean water is critical, as they are visual predators that rely on clear waters to see and pursue fish. Common Loons hold a special place in the hearts and minds of all who see and hear them. Their striking plumage, soulful cries, and ability to seemingly vanish under water have inspired legends of magic, mysticism, and creation for many centuries. For nearly four decades, Maine Audubon has worked to assess the status and safeguard the future of Maine’s loon population. Through the Maine Loon Project we work with residents and partners statewide to promote healthy lakes, clean water, and quality habitat for loons and to understand trends in their population over time. We engage lake users in efforts to protect loons from threats like boat strikes, nest washouts from boat wakes, and nest site disturbance during the vulnerable period of egg incubation. Across Maine, there are roughly 1,500 loon conservation volunteers that dedicate time and energy to observing and protecting Common Loons. Mainers care deeply about this iconic species and are eager to support initiatives – like this bill – to help protect Common Loon habitat and health. Unfortunately, the cost of keeping our lakes and ponds clean and healthy is growing each year, outpacing existing funding sources. This bill would infuse the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund with funding needed to support strategies to protect this unparalleled resource.

Funds could be used for a variety of strategies. For example, the LakeSmart program has identified hundreds of best management practices (BMPs) on more than 35 lakes across Maine that must be



implemented to protect lake water quality. BMPs include planting vegetative buffers and rain gardens, as well as other simple measures such as “rubber razors” and infiltration trenches. In addition, aging septic systems in poor soils need to be replaced because they pose a threat to lake water quality. Furthermore, funding for invasive species prevention programs like the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Courtesy Boat Inspection and Lake and River Protection Sticker programs have not kept pace with inflation, rising salaries, and growing demand.

These strategies are crucial to protecting the health of Maine lakes and ponds and the wildlife that call them home. **We strongly encourage the Committee to support this bill.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca “Ches” Gundrum  
Director of Advocacy