

HOSPITALITY
MAINE



45 Melville St. Augusta, ME 04330
207-623-2178
www.hospitalitymaine.com

327 Water St. Hallowell, ME 04347
207-623-0363
www.mainetourism.com

Testimony of Nate Cloutier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
February 24, 2025

In Support of LD 80, *"An Act to Designate the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine State Dog"*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Nate Cloutier, and I am here today on behalf of HospitalityMaine, representing Maine's restaurant and lodging industry. I am also here on behalf of the Maine Tourism Association, a non-profit association and the state's largest tourism organization with nearly 1500 members. HospitalityMaine and Maine Tourism Association support LD 80, *"An Act to Designate the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine State Dog."* This designation is not only a meaningful way to honor Maine's heritage but also a strategic step to enhance tourism, particularly during the winter months.

Maine's tourism industry experienced a 9% decline in the summer of 2024, underscoring the need to expand visitor appeal beyond peak summer travel. Recognizing the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog as our state dog presents a unique opportunity to position Maine as a premier winter tourism destination. This initiative aligns with our deep-rooted history in winter sports and outdoor adventure, helping to attract visitors who seek authentic, experience-driven travel.

The Seppala Siberian Sled Dog exemplifies the resilience, perseverance, and sense of community that define Maine. The heroic story of Togo—whose bravery and endurance during the 1925 serum run to Nome, Alaska, saved countless lives—demonstrates these qualities.

Seppala Siberian Sled Dogs are known for their strength, loyalty, and ability to thrive in harsh winter conditions, making them a fitting symbol of Maine's rugged landscape. Our state has played an integral role in mushing history, from Robert Peary's Arctic expeditions to Lewiston native Mush Moore's legendary dog sled journey from Alaska to Maine. Today, Maine continues to celebrate this legacy

through events like the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog Race in Fort Kent, which garners national and international attention.

Beyond its cultural and historical significance, this designation carries economic benefits. Other New England states have successfully leveraged similar initiatives to boost tourism, and Maine has an opportunity to do the same. By incorporating the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog into marketing campaigns, festivals, and winter events, we can encourage visitors to explore Maine's northern regions, benefiting hotels, restaurants, and local businesses that rely on tourism revenue year-round.

Honoring the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog as our state dog is a meaningful way to celebrate Maine's past while fostering economic growth and state pride.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 80.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.