

Good afternoon, Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.

My name is Cynthia Robbins, and I am the owner of the Poland Spring Resort in Poland Spring, Maine. The resort was established in 1794 by Jabez Ricker as a stagecoach stop. Over time, additional land was acquired, and more hotels were built, including a golf course. The resort gained international recognition with the discovery of Poland Water, but due to the Great Depression and World War II, the property was lost to the banks because of an unpaid mortgage.

At 16, I began working at Poland Spring as a waitress it had seen better times. Over the past 54 years, I have held various roles including being the chef for 25 years. My husband and I bought the resort in 1982 and since have improved the property. Mel Robbins passed in 2007, leaving me as sole Innkeeper, though I occasionally wash dishes and bartend. Running a small business requires one to perform whatever tasks are necessary to serve our guests.

Today, I am here to oppose LD 225, LD 632, and LD 746 a lodging tax increase. While I acknowledge the need for increased support for our school system, as the hotel was hit hard with an increase in our property tax last year of \$25,000 to provide supplementary funding for our Poland school systems. I do not believe this is the appropriate source for funding. Implementing these measures may actually reduce state revenue.

Maine businesses keep getting hit hard, between Covid, a mass shooting, and the changing economy. In 2020, state government priorities seemed to shift away from small businesses, crucial to Maine's economy. Minimum wage regulations require us to pay adult minimum wage to under-18 employees with no experience, which is detrimental for seasonal business. Earn Time Off rules increased our costs significantly, as we now must provide paid time off to over 100 part-time seasonal employees, including 14 & 15-year-olds, costing us an additional \$50,000 annually. Additionally, new 401k requirements added another \$10,000 in fees yearly.

Our house counts have fluctuated unpredictably, with expenses continuing to rise yearly since 2020. Maine has experienced a 9% loss of tourist just last year. Tourism, especially room rates, remains highly competitive, and the internet adds significant pressure. My guest price shop. Raising the lodging tax to the second highest in the country will not enhance Maine tourism, particularly during these challenging times of new tariffs which will decrease our Canadian visitors, and inflation. Most of my bookings come from budget-conscious tourists, many from Maine, who are concerned about the future.

I urge you to look elsewhere for additional funding for our schools, as the lodging industry cannot afford this additional tax.