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March 13, 2025

Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Maine State Legislature
Cross Building, Room 214

Re: *Friends of Casco Bay's (FOCB) Testimony in Support of LD 593 – An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program*

Dear Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

Please accept Friends of Casco Bay's (FOCB) testimony in support of LD 593 and vote that this bill OUGHT TO PASS. The Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program has a proven track record of providing access to natural areas for Mainers. It has helped conserve more than 66 miles of shoreline, including 73 recreational water access sites and 30 commercial working waterfront properties.¹ LD 593 will provide much needed bridge funding for LMF, and fill the gap until more permanent funding can be secured.

Established in 1989, Friends of Casco Bay works to improve and protect the health of Casco Bay. FOCB monitors the health of the Bay. We use that data to inform actions that keep Casco Bay healthy for Maine's fisheries, shellfisheries, recreation, tourism, and more. We cannot do our work without access to the Bay. We rely upon sites purchased with LMF funds for that purpose. Further, we see firsthand the importance of these access sites, such as Mere Point Boat Launch in Brunswick, to the commercial fishing industry and shellfish harvesters.

The following are some examples of lands purchased with LMF funds along coastal Casco Bay:

- Holbrook Wharf in Harpswell supports water quality monitoring, commercial fisheries and recreational access to the water. FOCB, with permission from the Holbrook Foundation, maintains a continuous monitoring station off the wharf, which collects data every fifteen minutes, all year long. Soon we will add technology that will allow real time access to this data. We and others rely on this data to track changes in water quality that inform how to act in response. The Wharf is a crucial hub for the local fishing and lobster industry, and it continues to draw visitors and recreational boaters.

¹ *About the Land for Maine's Future Program*, Maine DACF, <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/aboutus.shtml>.

- Skolfield Shore Preserve in Harpswell allows FOCB to access Middle Bay as part of a comprehensive Bay-wide PFAS monitoring effort. This Preserve also offers pristine walking trails, excellent birding, and is open to hunting.
- The Maquoit Bay Sherwood Project in Brunswick² preserves upland and intertidal areas that protect the health of Casco Bay by conserving natural landscape that filters stormwater and safeguards the balance of habitats needed in nearshore areas.
- Mere Point Boat Launch in Brunswick allows for deep water boat launching and recreational use. FOCB monitored water quality at this site for over 20 years. We also use the site to teach members about nearshore habitats and the effects of stormwater runoff on the Bay. The local fishing industry and oyster farmers use this boat launch often to access the Bay and thus their livelihood. People also launch recreational boats here, enjoy picnics, and walking the trails around the site.

These are simply a few examples of how LMF funds have been used to purchase land that benefits Mainers and Maine's economy. Friends of Casco Bay respectfully requests that this Committee vote that LD 593 OUGHT TO PASS. Thank you for considering our testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



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² *Governor Mills Announces Nine New Land for Maine's Future Conservation Projects*, Office of Governor Janet T. Mills, 2023, <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-announces-nine-new-land-maines-future-conservation-projects-2023-06-02>.