



STATE OF MAINE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
22 STATE HOUSE STATION

JANET T. MILLS
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY
NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1043

*An Act to Provide Free Admission to State Parks and Historic Sites for the Immediate Family
Members of Veterans and Active Military Personnel*

March 25, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Andy Cutko, and I am the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL). I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) neither for nor against LD 1043, *An Act to Provide Free Admission to State Parks and Historic Sites for the Immediate Family Members of Veterans and Active Military Personnel*.

Maine State Parks and Historic Sites currently allow free day-use access to senior citizens, children under five, Maine veterans, Gold Star families, and military service members on active duty. This bill would extend free access to Maine State Parks and Historic Sites for the immediate family members of a veteran and active military personnel, even if the veteran or active-duty member is not present. We currently extend free access to spouses and children of active military members, but only when that active member is present.

Because fees from State Parks are directed to the state's General Fund, this bill will have a fiscal impact. To calculate the fiscal impact, we would need to estimate the level of State Park use by veterans' immediate family members -- but only those family members under 65 and children over five. We would also need to estimate state park use by active military members and their families. Because the Bureau does not collect data on State Park use by veterans, their families, or active military personnel, the fiscal impact is difficult to estimate.

In addition, if families of veterans or active-duty members attend State Parks without the veteran or active-duty member present, the Bureau would need identification to confirm those relationships. I understand that the Bureau of Veterans' Services is willing to verify those family members. BPL is willing to work with Veterans' Services to create an appropriate identification card sufficient for park entrance.

Maine veterans have provided an immeasurable service to our state and nation, and their families have made sacrifices that enabled and endured their service. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.