

Thomas G. Warren  
Sangerville, ME

## Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 928

March 26, 2025

### **An Act to Maintain Public Access to Town Ways in Maine**

*Senator Baldacci and Representative Salisbury, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Tom Warren and I support LD 928. I live in Sangerville. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.*

I support LD 928 because without specific laws to prevent an abutter from blocking a discontinued town way, private citizens, cities and towns are forced to bear the burden of allocating valuable funds and limited resources to engage legal support to resolve access conflicts. I strongly believe LD 928 is a commonsense law that effectively addresses this growing wave of private land sales which all too often generate access issues.

I share the facts pertaining to a situation that is evolving in my town of residence, Sangerville, Piscataquis County.

- An active rural dirt road created by the town in the mid 1800's once led to both homesteads and farms. Until last year, this road was regularly used by a private landowner to access and actively manage and harvest his hay field and woodlot, along with his friends who regularly hunted on his property. This same road continued to a Town owned, actively managed woodlot that was deeded to the town by the Federal Government with a stipulation that it was to be used for public purposes.
- The town of Sangerville stopped maintaining this road and town records do not clearly reflect any formal vote of discontinuance of this specific section of the road.
- An individual purchased land on both sides of this road leading to the private and town owned land described above. This new landowner placed a locked gate on the road blocking access to both the private and town owned land. The landowners' basis for this action is his claim that he was informed by the Town Manager and Select Board that the town road ended at his property.

As a solution to this conflict, the Town Select Board and Town Manager have placed an Article on the Annual Town Meeting agenda to determine what funds the Town will appropriate to confirm the rights to the road leading to the town woodlot or eminent domain. This action was supported with legal advice from the Town's attorney and determined to be the most cost effective path to maintain rightful access to both private and town owned property.

**LD 928** is a commonsense solution to prevent this all too common scenario. and I respectively ask for your support of this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.