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Testimony of Representative Nina Milliken in support of
**LD 761, An Act to Support the Maintenance, Preservation and
Promotion of State Historic Sites**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and my friends and colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Nina Milliken and I have the privilege of representing the good people of the Blue Hill Peninsula in the Maine State House, including the town of Castine where Fort George sits. Today I come to add my support for **LD 761, An Act to Support the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites**.

My husband, Jesse, pitched the winning baseball game in the high school Maine state championship in 1997. He'd be very happy to tell you about the glory days of his youth and his favorite sport, but more than anything, you'd want to ask him about his favorite little league field. The town of Castine has undoubtedly the most memorable little league field on the Blue Hill Peninsula and probably anywhere in Maine, maybe in the country. It sits on top of Fort George, a Revolutionary War era fort built in a very strategic location in 1779. Where else in the U.S. can you hit a homer on such an important piece of American history? Perhaps that is why it has hosted such famous ball players as Satchel Paige, one of the first African American players to play in the major leagues, and Penobscot tribal member, Louis Sockalexis, nicknamed the Deerfoot of the Diamond, the first Native American player to play for the pros.

Fort George is an integral part of the town and community. There are historical landmarks everywhere you turn in Castine, but Fort George has been an important part of the landscape and the lives of the citizens of the town for generations. It is large and hard to miss. Before coming to the Legislature, I was a high school teacher. In education classes, I was taught to work to build bridges that connect the past to the present for students in my classes. As a teacher, I tried hard to make history relevant to the lives of students. Fort George does this without trying. Kids used to be able to literally play sports on a military fort that was a sight of battles in American wars of yore.

Little league aside, Castine itself is a goldmine of interest for history buffs. It is the oldest permanent settlement in all of New England and at different times in history, has been occupied by four different countries. It is a tumultuous history that I don't have time to even get close to covering in this testimony, but I invite you to come to Castine and visit and I'd be happy to show you around a bit. We can explore some of the 13 forts Castine has from this era, that is about one fort for every 63 residents of the town.

But, the Fort needs some help. She has found herself in a state of disrepair and, despite being a state historic landmark, she doesn't get any financial assistance from the state and is in dire need of some support to help fix some of her crumbling infrastructure. The state owns this site and several others. We should be paying to maintain them.

Our history in Maine is important. Indeed, Fort George is a landmark of notable history for the entire country. I hope that this testimony and that of other supporters of this bill will compel you to consider sending some resources over to support this tangible relic of American history and the other sites that are in need of repairs.

I appreciate your time and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have as I am able.