



Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

April 9, 2025

**RE: LD 1241, An Act to Establish the Make Change for Wildlife Program to Support the Maine Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund**

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Roberts, and Members of the IFW Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Director of Advocacy. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of LD 1241, *An Act to Establish the Make Change for Wildlife Program to Support the Maine Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund*.

Biodiversity is under threat. We all hear this a lot – *but what does it really mean?* According to the Maine Climate Council’s Scientific and Technical Subcommittee it means 1 in 4 birds are gone since 1970. It means a quarter of Maine’s at-risk butterflies are threatened by climate change. It looks like eight new species – five birds, one bat, one bee, and one beetle – being added to Maine’s Endangered and Threatened Species list two years ago. **We have the power to do *our* part to help prevent some of the worst outcomes for native species in Maine – and LD 1241 offers one of many paths to help support the work of protecting our biodiversity.**

Created in 1975, the Maine Endangered Species Act (MESA) has been critical in keeping dozens of species from going extinct. There are currently 57 species on Maine’s Endangered and Threatened Species list. It is essential to remember that the ultimate goal of MESA is to get species *off* the list. In order to do that, Maine’s wildlife biologists need support. LD 1241 helps to address the urgent funding needs required to help get species off the list.

**This legislation establishes the “Make Change for Wildlife” program in order to help generate voluntary contributions to benefit the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s (DIFW) Maine Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund.** Businesses who want to participate in this program would collect customer contributions at the point-of-sale by offering customers the option to “round up” their purchases to the nearest dollar or some alternative amount,



which would all go into the fund. Additionally, businesses have the option to deduct an amount equal to the funds voluntarily contributed by the customer up to \$10,000 annually from state corporate income taxes, which should help incentivize participation. Should this legislation advance, my organization would dedicate resources to help promote and support businesses in participating. **Per DIFW's recent report on the fund's status to this committee, we know that they do not have what they need in order to help keep vulnerable native species like the Roseate Tern, Little Brown Bat, and Katahdin Arctic Butterfly from going extinct.**

The nature of Maine underpins everything—clean air and water, food, medicine, climate regulation, and more. Losing biodiversity threatens human health, food security, and economies. With some marketing support and outreach, this voluntary program has great potential. LD 1241 represents a creative – likely a first-in-the-state – opportunity to help support our state's wildlife agency in carrying out their responsibility in bringing at-risk species back from the brink. **I hope you will support this novel initiative.** Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca "Ches" Gundrum  
Director of Advocacy