

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

In Opposition to L.D. 1435

**“An Act to Allow a Municipality or Locally Recognized Lake Association to
Post Certain Information on the Department of Inland Fisheries and
Wildlife's Information Kiosks Located at State Boat Launch Facilities”**

DATE OF HEARING: Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Diano Circo, Chief Planner at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW), speaking on behalf of the Department in opposition to L.D. 1435.

This bill requires the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to provide reasonable space to display information on the department's informational kiosks located at state boat launch facilities to municipalities and local lake associations and similar nonprofit organizations and disseminate to the general public information about these associations and organizations and water quality and invasive species activities.

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife manages 182 water access facilities across the state to provide fair and equitable public access to Maine's waters for fishing and boating. All of the Department's facilities are acquired, developed, or maintained utilizing federal funds.

Standardized and concise signage across all Department facilities is essential for clear, accurate, and effective messaging. Previously, the Department maintained informational kiosks at many of its water access sites. However, these kiosks became costly and difficult to maintain and frequently became collection points for cluttered, incorrect, or misleading information. Given the large number of sites managed by the Department, effectively regulating the content placed in these kiosks was nearly impossible, resulting in chaotic and ineffective messaging. As a result, the Department has actively worked over the past several years to remove these kiosks to address these issues.

Currently, our signage prioritizes essential information such as site use rules, state boating and fishing regulations, aquatic invasive species prevention (Clean, Drain, Dry), and required notices from funding sources like the Sport Fish Restoration Program and Land for Maine's Future.

In 2023, aquatic invasive species signage was thoughtfully developed through a legislative-directed interagency task force. This task force included broad stakeholder representation from lake associations, watercraft owner groups, educational programs, marinas, municipalities, sporting associations, and outdoor recreation organizations.

The Department engages in extensive outreach and education efforts statewide to raise awareness about the importance of preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. These initiatives include partnerships with stakeholder groups, public information campaigns, workshops, educational materials, and direct community engagement to effectively communicate best practices and prevention strategies. Additionally, the Department utilizes consistent and unified messaging developed by the interagency task force to ensure accuracy and effectiveness.

The Department frequently receives additional requests from diverse entities including lake and watershed associations, fishing and hunting groups, municipalities, businesses, and conservation organizations to install their signs at our facilities. Additionally, we routinely find numerous unauthorized signs that are inaccurate, misleading, or contradictory to Department policies. Allowing proliferation of signs leads to "sign fatigue," diminishing the effectiveness of critical messaging and overwhelming visitors with excessive and conflicting information.

Due to these challenges, the Department established a clear signage policy limiting signs and messaging dissemination exclusively to those developed and installed by the Department. Allowing individual organizations or businesses to use federally and state-funded public facilities for advertising, advocacy, fundraising, or requiring the Department to distribute their organizational messaging raises significant policy concerns and questions regarding the appropriate use of public resources for private benefit. Furthermore, setting such a precedent could rapidly become overwhelming and exceedingly difficult for the Department to effectively manage.

For these reasons, the Department opposes this bill and respectfully urges the Committee to carefully consider the impacts of sign fatigue and information overload on the effectiveness of vital communications at our facilities.

I would be pleased to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.