



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY**

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1547

*An Act to Use a Portion of the Sales Tax on Snowmobiles to
Fund Maine's Snowmobile Trail Programs*

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Joe Higgins, and I am the Supervisor for the Snowmobile Program with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF) neither for nor against LD 1547, *An Act to Use a Portion of the Sales Tax on Snowmobiles to Fund Maine's Snowmobile Trail Programs*.

The snowmobile industry in Maine is not only a cherished outdoor tradition—it's a powerful driver of Maine's winter economy. According to the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, snowmobiling contributes over \$600 million annually in economic activity. This revenue supports thousands of jobs in rural communities. It bolsters local businesses such as gas stations, restaurants, lodges, and repair shops, especially during the quieter winter months when other tourism activity slows down.

The success of this industry depends on the maintenance of more than 14,000 miles of snowmobile trails, with 95% of the trail system on private lands. Snowmobile trails are made possible through the hard work of volunteer clubs and vital support from the Maine Snowmobile Association, which also helps organize clubs and has been representing the industry since 1968.

The Maine Snowmobile Program, a division within the Bureau of Parks and Lands, currently derives its funding from snowmobile registrations and a portion of the gas tax. Most of this funding, which averages about \$5.9 million annually, is granted to municipalities, counties, and snowmobile clubs across the state to help maintain trails and purchase grooming equipment. In 2024, clubs reported \$8.85 million in expenses. In particular, severe storms have washed out trails over the past few years, knocked out bridges, and caused trails to close. In addition, many snowmobile clubs use outdated grooming equipment, and this bill would allow for an infusion of funds to purchase needed and more efficient equipment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to try and answer any questions.

HARLOW BUILDING
18 ELKINS LANE
AUGUSTA, MAINE



PHONE: (207) 287-3200
FAX: (207) 287-2400
WEB: WWW.MAINE.GOV/DACF