

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 1661**

**“An Act to Establish a Comprehensive and Interagency Approach to Invasive
Species Management”**

Presented by: Representative FROST of Belgrade.

Cosponsored by: Senator BENNETT of Oxford and Representatives: DANA of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor, GUERRETTE of Caribou, HASENFUS of Readfield, HEPLER of Woolwich, TERRY of Gorham, Senator: BLACK of Franklin.

DATE OF HEARING: April 24, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 1661**.

This bill establishes the Maine Invasive Species Advisory Council and the Comprehensive Invasive Species Management Office to evaluate and prioritize invasive species management across all taxa and coordinate interagency collaboration to accomplish invasive species prevention, management, education and outreach.

Invasive species are one of the most significant threats to Maine’s natural environment and native fish and wildlife species. Ranging from aquatic invertebrates and plants to invasive fish, terrestrial plants, exotic wildlife, tree pests and diseases, wildlife diseases and more, invasive species take many forms and have a diversity of impacts. Our agency collaborates closely with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and many other partners to combat these threats. We do this work as part of our core mission to preserve and protect Maine’s fish and wildlife, despite limited dedicated resources and only one full-time position focused on invasive species.

Although we appreciate the intent of this bill and certainly agree that more resources should be directed at managing invasive species, we are concerned that establishing and providing staff support to an Invasive Species Advisory Council will redirect the limited agency staff time away from on-the-ground management. We believe the agencies are already doing an excellent job coordinating efforts when doing so improves efficiency and adds value to the work. We are concerned that the extremely broad nature of the

taxa, impacts, and solutions to invasive species will make it challenging for an Advisory Council to provide meaningful direction to the state's efforts to manage them. We believe that existing interagency working groups, such as those that are currently focused on aquatic invasives and on terrestrial invasive plants, would be a better model for additional coordination than a single, combined Council that addresses all invasive species issues across the state. We also want to make sure the committee is aware that the Maine Climate Council and its Natural and Working Lands Committee, which includes representatives from DACF, IFW, and other partner agencies, have already incorporated invasive species management into ongoing interagency collaboration. Therefore, the proposed bill would partially duplicate an effort that already exists at the Maine Climate Council.

Finally, as drafted, this bill would place the statute creating the Invasive Species Advisory Council and Comprehensive Invasive Species Management Office in the 'Nuisance Wildlife' Section of Title 12, Part 13. We do not feel this is an appropriate location and would suggest that these programs may be a better fit as a new Subchapter in Title 5, Chapter 314 (Coordination of Land Use and Natural Resource Management).

Above all, we believe that if the state is able to direct additional resources towards the management of invasive species, these resources will be most effective if focused on active management and outreach programs within the natural resource agencies.

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