

April 30, 2025

Neither For Nor Against LD 1612 Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Solicit Proposals for the Utilization of Unused State-owned Railroad Lines

To: Joint Transportation Committee

From: Patsy Barber, Hiram

My name is Patsy Barber from Hiram and I am Neither For Nor Against LD 1612

As I have indicated in prior testimony before this committee, I am 100% supportive of Maine DOT pulling out RFP's for our state-owned railroads.

During these prior discussions, MDOT Commissioner VanDore invited any interested rail companies to come speak with him directly regarding use of state owned lines, whether an RFP was put out or not. And I am happy to say that he has been true to his word.

Recent examples of railroad discussions:

- 1) The Rockland Branch has a successful new operator. Maine Switching Services' new Cumberland & Kennebec Railroad will be running freight commencing immediately, and hopefully excursion trains very soon.
- 2) Maine Switching Services is currently in discussions with MDOT regarding restoring rail services on the Lower Road Railroad from Brunswick to Augusta
- 3) Profile Maintenance Holdings/Onway Scenic RR are in

Negotiations at this time regarding the Mountain Division Line from Portland to Fryeburg.

In light of these developments I would suggest new RFP's exempt any state rail line where there are accepted or ongoing discussions or negotiations regarding rail use.

Commissioner Van Natta also stated prior that removal of rail for replacement with a trail is the absolute last option for our state-owned lines.

As such I feel the timeline to put out any RFP for rail use would be instead any reasonable time period prior to imminent track removal versus the 180 days in this bill.

I also feel for clarification purposes, that the term "rail-based" be added in front of the "recreational or commercial activities" in Section 2 line 3.

I want to thank MDOT's Commissioner Van Natta, Nate Moulton, Nate Howard for their willingness to engage with Maine short-line railroads regarding use of our state-owned lines.

I look forward to the continued cooperation and can't wait to see what the future holds for the Maine rail industry.

Thank you