



132nd Legislature, L.D. 1737

" An Act to Ensure the Future of Maine's Sporting Camp Heritage "

Testimony in Support as Amended by Sponsor

May 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Nathan Theriault, and I am the Treasurer of the Maine Sporting Camp Association. My family operates the Eagle Lake Sporting Camps, a complex of 14 log cabins, a guide house, 36-seat restaurant, and lounge. The camps were established in 1889.

The Maine Office of Tourism and other groups are trying to get some of the millions of tourists who overflow the coast of Maine to instead visit the mountains and forests of Maine. Maine Sporting Camps, since they provide food and lodging can help make that happen. But, not without addressing the issues leading to L.D. 1737.

Generational changes are resulting in the sale of many sporting camps. Three legendary camps were recently sold. The new buyers closed the doors to the public. Unfortunately, buyers wanting to maintain the sporting camp tradition could not be found. Regulations.

Another very remote camp with many cabins and a large dining facility was sold to a buyer who could not justify the expense to license to serve food. Regulations.

Sadly, the sporting camp where I learned, at 8 years old, to become an expert at the game of landing a ring-on-a-string on a distant nail was sold to a large landowner. The company had amazing plans to update the main lodge to serve future generations. After investigating, however, it abruptly tore down the lodge and gated the road to the remaining cabins. I am convinced the regulations weighed on the decision.

Legislators have always had a heart for helping to keep the sporting camp tradition alive. In 2002, the 120th Maine Legislature issued a Joint Resolution recognizing the historical contribution to Maine's cultural heritage by Sporting Camps and emphasized their importance to the local and regional economies. The LUPC has special rules which support the development of sporting camps. And IFW has a special program designed to help sporting camps overcome the devastating decline of the deer herd and stimulate the rural economy by providing a limited number of Moose tags which can be sold to sporting camp clients.

L.D. 1737 establishes a unique regulatory framework for sporting camps, many of which are in remote areas and operate off-the-grid. It also makes clear that the Health Inspection Program should not be issuing "sporting camp" licenses to motels, vacation homes, cottages, private cabins, and facilities which are clearly not operating as sporting camps and serving the public. Such improper licensing jeopardizes sporting camp marketing advantages and programs in place at LUPC and IFW and is harming genuine sporting camps.

Thank you.