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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1312**

*An Act to Provide a Source of Revenue for School Construction and for the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund*

**November 14, 2025**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Laura Graham, and I am the Director of the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program in the Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning (BRILUP) within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). I am speaking in favor of LD 1312, *An Act to Provide a Source of Revenue for School Construction and for the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund*.

This bill provides a stable source of funding for the LMF program within DACF. LMF is the State of Maine's primary funding vehicle for conserving land for its natural, working, and recreational value. The program was established in 1987 when Maine citizens voted to fund \$35 million to purchase lands of statewide importance.

LMF has garnered broad-based support ever since. LMF respects landowner rights by acquiring land from willing sellers, pursues a mission defined by the public, provides a tangible return to everyone who cherishes Maine's landscape (from hunter and hiker to snowmobiler and bird watcher), and leverages both federal and private funding for state priority purchases.

Since 2021, LMF-conserved acreage has increased by nearly 39,000 acres, with almost 40,000 more anticipated in the next 12 months as projects close. However, these accomplishments only contribute 1% toward the current Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan target of 30% total conserved lands in Maine. A sustainable funding source is necessary for LMF to accomplish this and other important conservation goals. The impacts of conserved lands extend far beyond recreational opportunity – they support public health, preserve active farmland, provide access to economic opportunity, and foster community connection.

As of November 1, 2025, LMF has committed nearly 93% of the \$40M general fund appropriation that Governor Mills and the Legislature worked to provide to the LMF Trust Fund in 2021 (\$39,578,115 of the \$42,751,453 (including interest earned)). LMF funding is on track to

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be entirely depleted in January 2026 when it applies those funds to its next issuance of Requests for Proposals.

Given the continued strong interest in LMF's programs, the significant development pressure facing farmland, forests, and working waterfronts, the rising costs of land, the importance of sequestering carbon, and the broad public benefits of LMF's investments in conservation, DACF supports the ongoing appropriation established by LD 1312. Since LMF projects often span multiple fiscal years, we recommend language that establishes the appropriation as a general fund non-lapsing account or an annual transfer to LMF's non-lapsing Other Special Revenue account.

Finally, the Department wishes to thank Senator Pierce and the many stakeholders who are advocating in support of LMF funding within LD 1312.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.