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LD 2141: An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program and Public Defender Office Staffing

Testimony of Rep. Matt Moonen, Portland

February 4, 2026

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to share my support of **LD 2141: An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program and Public Defender Office Staffing**.

I was shocked to learn that unclaimed bottle deposit funds are being kept by corporations instead of being used to benefit the people of Maine, so I am deeply grateful to Senator Brenner for bringing this proposal forward.

As drafted, LD 2141 directs a portion of these unclaimed deposits toward the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services to support regional public defender office staffing. As you may know, there is an urgent need to bolster Maine's public defense system. I want to thank Senator Brenner for recognizing that need and for addressing it in this legislation.

However, it is my understanding that the Governor's supplemental budget proposal includes funding to improve staffing levels in the regional public defender offices. For this reason, Section 5 of the bill is no longer necessary.

The fact remains that unclaimed bottle deposit funds should be used for public benefit, and I support Senator Brenner's proposal to direct them toward protecting Maine's valuable natural resources by restoring water quality and preserving farmland.

Thank you for your time and for your work to ensure these funds are used for appropriate purposes. I hope you will join me in supporting this bill.