



# Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Legislative Director, Maine Conservation Voters

In support of LD 1054

*“An Act to Amend Certain Definitions in the Laws Governing Conservation Easements”*

Before the Agriculture and Conservation Committee

February 24, 2026

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agriculture and Conservation Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the legislative director for Maine Conservation Voters. MCV is a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I am here to testify in support of LD 1054 *“An Act to Amend Certain Definitions in the Laws Governing Conservation Easements”*.

Maine has long been a national leader in land conservation. Through the work of many local and regional partners, conservation easements have protected thousands of acres of working forests, farms, wetlands, and shorelands. These tools have preserved public access, safeguarded wildlife habitat, and sustained Maine’s natural resource economy. However, while current law clearly supports the protection of scenic, open space, and ecological values, it does not expressly recognize the conservation of historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural resources as a qualifying conservation purpose. And, currently, the Wabanaki people are not eligible to take advantage of conservation easements to help preserve their lands and cultural heritage. LD 1054 will expand the definition of “holder” in the Conservation Easement Act to include federally recognized Indian tribes which would enhance opportunities for the Wabanaki Nations to access the same legal tools as land trusts and municipalities, allowing them to better care for Wabanaki lands and culturally important sites.

Importantly, this change does not weaken existing conservation standards. It does not reduce environmental protections or open the door to development. Rather, it clarifies

that conservation can include the protection of archaeological sites, traditional cultural properties, and other features that reflect Maine's diverse history.

Maine's identity is rooted not only in its forests, fields, and waters, but also in the communities and traditions that have shaped them for generations. By modernizing the statutory definition of conservation easement, the Legislature can ensure that our conservation tools reflect this broader and more accurate understanding of stewardship.

We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1054.

Thank you.