

Hallie Arno  
Lincolntonville

4 March 2021

To: Agriculture and Forestry Committee

From: Hallie Arno

Re: Testimony in Opposition of LD 324, An Act To Limit Public Land Ownership in Maine

I am writing as a Lincolntonville resident and student at College of the Atlantic to urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 324. An Act To Limit Public Land Ownership in Maine.

Maine is the Pine Tree State. Our state is characterized by open spaces, natural beauty, and an abundance of forests, farms, and fish resources. Public lands are an important part of our heritage as hunters, fishermen, and foresters, as well as the backbone of our modern tourism economy. To better support the people of Maine and the economy, the legislature should support access to public lands by investing in programs like Land For Maine’s Future.

I live in Lincolntonville and am lucky enough to live near Camden Hills State Park. I walked, ran, and biked in the park often pre-pandemic, but during lockdown it was essential for mental and physical health to have a place where I could be outdoors and active. Many others have had similar experiences. Both before and during the pandemic, I see the effects of tourism firsthand, and how recreation supports the Midcoast economy. I currently go to College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, where I can access trails in Acadia from my street or campus. This has given me opportunities for hiking, ecological research, and constant natural beauty. Bar Harbor is one of Maine’s largest tourist attractions, and the reason it has so many restaurants, shops, and galleries for locals to access is due to the existence of the park. We need more of these spaces around the state. Everyone should have access to public lands, and an arbitrary limit to public lands would only hurt community well-being, from access to outdoor spaces to the tourism economy.

This bill would arbitrarily limit these valuable public lands. The process of designating land as state or federally owned is already transparent, uses public input, and functions as it should. This bill does not address any of Maine’s needs. Additionally, it would place Maine politically in a position of opposition to public lands, something that would be counter to our own best interests and goals.

Because of the many benefits of public lands for Maine, both socially and economically, I hope you will oppose LD 324. Respectfully,

Hallie Arno