

## Testimony on LD 736: An Act to Enhance Maine's Ecological Reserve System

**Jeff Marks, Maine Director & Senior Policy Advocate**

Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, January 25, 2022

Honorable Committee Chairs Senator Dill & Representative O'Neil and Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on *LD 736 – An Act to Enhance Maine's Ecological Reserve System*.

Acadia Center is a non-profit, research and advocacy organization incorporated in Maine and committed to advancing the clean energy future by offering real-world solutions to the climate crisis. Acadia Center tackles complex problems, identifies clear recommendations for reforms, and advocates to create significant change that supports a low-carbon economy across the Northeast which can then be a model for application elsewhere. Acadia Center identifies regional, state, and local improvements that will dramatically reduce carbon pollution and improve quality of life throughout the Northeastern United States.

### **Acadia Center supports LD 736, as proposed to be amended by the sponsor.**

Maine is 90% forested. Natural lands, especially forests, sequester and store a lot of carbon. Maine's natural forests play an essential role in capturing atmospheric carbon. Acadia Center supports climate solutions designed to protect and conserve natural lands and increase carbon storage opportunities, avoid emissions, and enhance climate adaptation and resilience. Currently, Maine forestland sequesters the equivalent of 75% of Maine's GHG emissions and hold a tremendous potential – with greater focus and investment – to sequester even more carbon and offset further emissions from all other sectors of Maine's economy. Ecological reserves are large carbon sinks, and, on average, ecological reserves store 30% more above-ground carbon than other lands in Maine on a per acre basis.

Expanding ecological reserves is a critical part of meeting the state's climate goals and in alignment with the recommendations of the Natural and Working Lands Working Group of the Maine Climate Council. Protecting natural areas, like coastal wetlands, riparian areas, and forests, helps reduce the community and infrastructure impacts of extreme weather events that are increasing in frequency due to climate change. The Maine Climate Action Plan calls for increased conserved land acreage to 30 percent by 2030, and expanding ecological reserves is one avenue for reaching this critical goal. Therefore, Acadia Center supports LD 736 and its potential to help trap and store carbon pollution while conserving Maine's valued natural resources. Increasing the size of the ecological reserve system is a necessary step to mitigate and adapt to climate change, protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and conserve habitat types not currently protected. However, expansion of Maine's ecological reserve system cannot happen without legislative action through passage of LD 736 to remove the [statutory limits](#) on the size of the ecological reserve system

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony on LD 736. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

### **For more information:**

Jeff Marks, [jmarks@acadiacenter.org](mailto:jmarks@acadiacenter.org), 207.236.6470 x304