

Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee  
Augusta, ME 04333

January 24, 2022

Dear Chairpersons Dill and O'Neil, and committee members:

I am writing in support of LD 736 – An Act to Enhance the Ecological Reserve System. It is not enough to simply conserve land and limit development, especially in a state that is expected to see an increase in population and numbers of houses and roads in the next two decades. If we want to conserve species and the integrity of ecological processes that make our lives possible, the science is clear that we need to protect large blocks of land and manage them with a “hands-off” approach. More ecological reserve land is needed to ensure Maine’s future.

Whether or not we believe our climate is changing due to human impacts, in order to maintain the free services provided by the natural world (soil formation and fertility, water cycling and filtration, and photosynthesis) that we all depend on, and to ensure that we keep the variety and number of species that exist in Maine, we need to strategically protect large areas of conserved land that is managed with minimal human impacts. This will ensure the long-term health of all of our species and ecosystem types. A robust and well-functioning environment is the backbone of a healthy economy.

I have been involved in land conservation work in Maine for more than 20 years. I have had the good fortune to meet and work with many of the committed scientists and professionals who work tirelessly to ensure that Maine’s natural heritage supports our lives and communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Our current ecological reserve system must be expanded. I encourage you to trust the experience, knowledge and acquired wisdom of these people advocating for changes to this law. Thank you for consideration of my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Buck O’Herin  
Board Chair, Midcoast Conservancy  
boherin1954@gmail.com  
Cell Ph: 207-323-8072