



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters

“Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Conduct an Accessibility Study of All Maine State Parks and Historic Sites and to Develop a Plan to Remove Access Barriers”

Before the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee

March 20, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and the distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee.

My name is Kathleen Meil, Senior Director of Policy and Partnerships at Maine Conservation Voters, writing in support of LD 988, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Conduct an Accessibility Study of All Maine State Parks and Historic Sites and to Develop a Plan to Remove Access Barriers,” on behalf of more than 13,000 members and supporters of Maine Conservation Voters. Maine Conservation Voters is dedicated to ensuring equal access to Maine’s rich outdoors for all Maine citizens and visitors. This includes our forty-eight¹ state parks and historical sites, which brought in 3.3 million visitors in 2021 and 2022.

Eleven percent of Maine people have mobility disabilities,² meaning more than 150,000 Mainers may struggle to access their state parks. The last study conducted to evaluate the accessibility of Maine’s parks was completed in 1996, almost 30 years ago. Since 1996, our population has grown, our parks have become more attended, and we’re facing a worsening climate crisis that will only continue to entice people to move to Maine, where we still have “tolerable” weather.

Maine has recently launched a \$50,000,000 initiative to rebuild Maine’s state parks, and a vital part of this rebuilding has to be addressing the inequity caused by access barriers to parks. To fix this inequality, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry must conduct accessibility studies to identify access barriers in our state parks and historic sites. The State must engage the disability community in the development of plans to remedy these barriers. The

¹ [State Parks: About Us: Bureau of Parks and Lands: Maine DACF](#)

² [Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data: Maine | CDC](#)

studies should engage those with lived experience and those with expertise in conducting accessibility studies for developed outdoor spaces.

Mainers know that the outdoors is truly for everyone. Maine Conservation Voters agrees and urges this Committee to give every person the ability to access nature in any season, without barriers. Maine Conservation Voters urges you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 998.

Thank you.

Kathleen Meil
Senior Director of Policy and Partnerships
Maine Conservation Voters