

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and other distinguished members of the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am Peggy Rotundo from Lewiston, Maine. As a volunteer member of the Board of Directors of the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, Maine, I am pleased to offer this written testimony in support of LD 440, An Act to Conserve the Frances Perkins Homestead National Historic Landmark.

The Frances Perkins Homestead, which is comprised of a 1837 brick farmhouse and the 57 acres that surround it, is one of Maine's historic treasures. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2019, it provides a lens into Maine's past. On the grounds there are remnants of the Perkins' family-owned brickyard by the Damariscotta River as well as a garrison location from the French and Indian Wars. From 1927-1965 it was the home of Francis Perkins, first U.S. Secretary of Labor (1933-1945) and the first woman to serve in a Presidential Cabinet. Ms Perkins was the architect of the financial and social security net that was created for Americans during the New Deal, establishing the Social Security system, which older Americans enjoy today, as well as the minimum wage and unemployment and workers compensation insurance.

As of February 2021, the Frances Perkins Center Board had raised nearly 3.1 million dollars in federal and private funds toward the projected \$ 3.5 needed to preserve and restore the Homestead. In 2020 the Center received a prestigious Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service to help with the renovation of the Homestead and surrounding property. The Center must provide \$ 824,000 from matching funds, including in kind services, to meet the NPS grant requirement. Funding from the State of Maine, in any amount, would help the Center meet this matching goal and solidify the State's partnership with the federal government in helping to preserve this historic treasure.

The Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust has also come on board as a partner, holding a conservation trust on 53 of the 57 acres of homestead property, assuring public access to the Homestead's acreage in perpetuity.

The Frances Perkins Homestead, recognized as a National Landmark, will benefit the Twin Cities of Damariscotta and Newcastle as well as Maine's entire tourism industry. A small investment now by the State will pay off in the years to come as people from inside and outside Maine come to walk the 57 acres and to tour the brick house to learn about Maine's rich history and about the life of the remarkable Frances Perkins, to whom we as Americans owe so much.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the cost associated with this bill and whether we should be asking for help at this time when the economic challenges that the State faces are so enormous. If you believe as I do that the bill has merit and would ultimately benefit the people of Maine, I would respectfully request

that you support it so that it can move forward and hopefully eventually get to the Appropriations Table. If there happens to be a small amount of one time funding that is available at the end of the session, it would be wonderful to have the bill alive and positioned to benefit from it.

I thank you for your attention and consideration of the merits of this bill.