

**Testimony of Dirk Gouwens, Executive Director,  
Ski Maine Association**

**LD 1493**

Resolve, Directing the Department of Economic and Community  
Development To Create and Administer a Fund To Provide  
Seasonal and Tourism Industry Recovery Grants

**Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development,  
Economic Advancement and Business**

**April 20, 2021**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and Members of the  
Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement  
and Business.

My name is Dirk Gouwens and I am writing to you today as the  
Executive Director of the Ski Maine Association, a not for profit  
organization that represents the interests of the Alpine and Nordic  
Ski Centers in the State of Maine.

We applaud the sponsors of this resolve and the committee for  
considering it. There are several parts that we favor, but there are  
several other items that we be opposed to should this resolve be  
approved.

Ski Areas in Maine took the brunt of the economic hit in the tourism  
sector this past winter. Just as we were about to begin our season in  
November, Governor Mills essentially shut down tourism to the state  
due to ongoing concerns about residents from other states spreading  
the coronavirus in Maine. Out of state residents were required to  
either obtain negative covid test which were cost prohibitive in  
several neighboring states, or quarantine for two weeks which is not  
practical when you consider that the average ski vacation is 3-4  
days. This policy continued until the end of March which was after  
many ski areas closed. We were also limited to 50 people indoors  
which severely impacted Food and Beverage business at ski areas.

To be clear, ski areas are in need of economic assistance after a  
difficult ski season. However, some of the restrictions in this resolve  
would not be favorable to ski areas. We are also confused about  
why golf courses are exempt from this program. Several of our ski  
areas have golf courses.

We would encourage the sponsors and the committee to continue to encourage the Department of Economic and Community Development to establish economic recovery grants for Maine tourism businesses like ski areas, but we also encourage the committee to wait to see the guidelines from the federal government to see if they would be more inclusive and able to assist more businesses in need.